

PLUCK AND LUCK

COMPLETE STORIES OF ADVENTURE.

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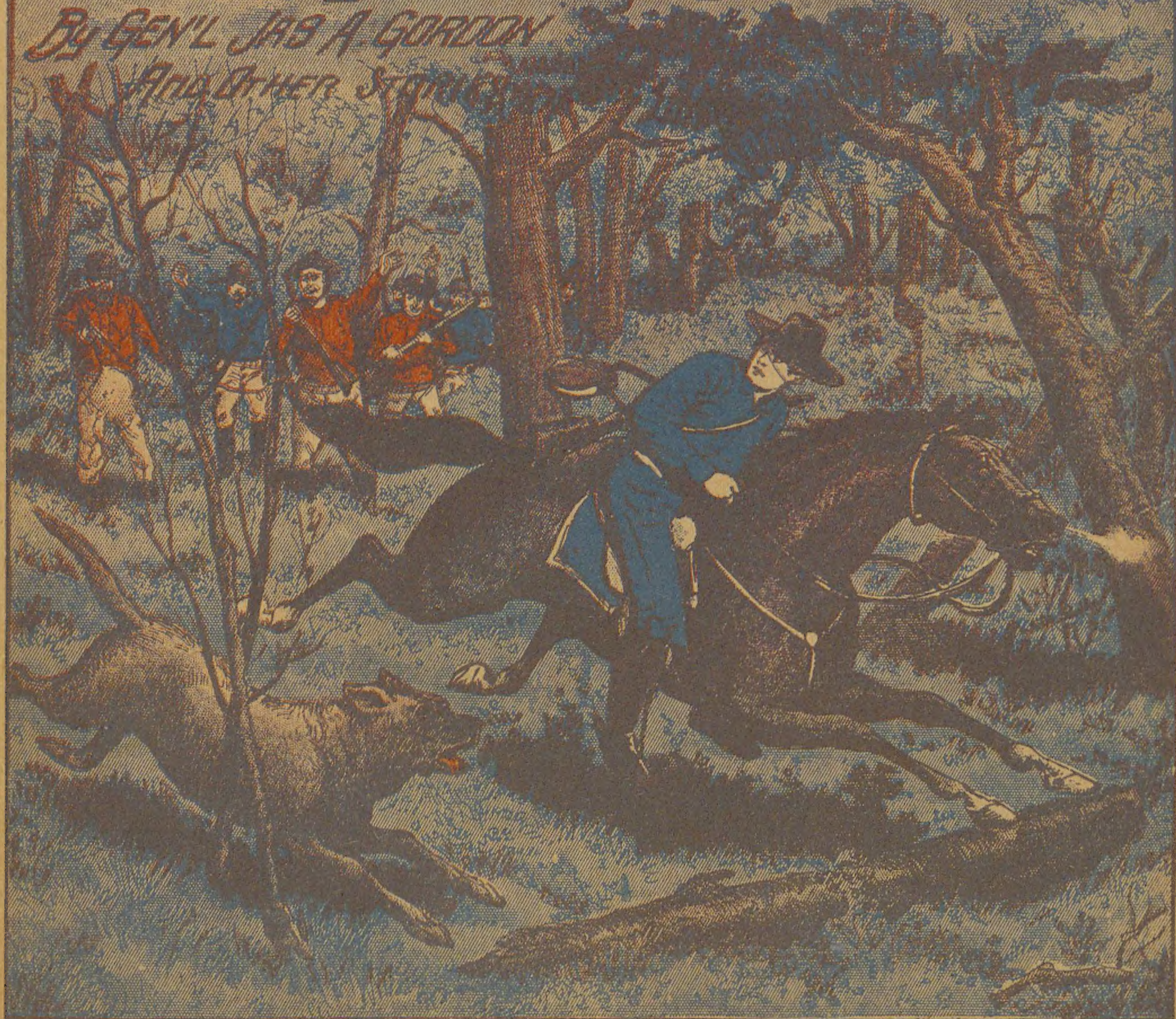
No. 1091.

NEW YORK, APRIL 30, 1919.

Price 6 Cents

THE BOY CAVALRY SCOUT; OR, LIFE IN THE SADDLE.

By GEN'L JAS A. GORDON
And Other Stories



Bruno released his hold upon Jaffers and bounded after Ned as he dashed away. Jaffers tried to shoot the dog, but failed, and he shouted to the guerillas: "After him, men! He is Grant's boy cavalry scout!"

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LIFE IN THE SADDLE

By GEN'L JAS. A. GORDON

CHAPTER I.

THE DESERTER'S PLOT—RACING TO SAVE A UNION ARMY.

The soft, sweet notes of the cavalry bugle sounding "boots and saddles," rang out over the encampment of the cavalry division of the Army of the Potomac.

It was the spring of 1864, and General Grant had been appointed commander-in-chief of the Federal army.

It was suspected among the soldiers that an important movement was contemplated by the great military chieftain, but if such was the fact, the utmost secrecy had been maintained by the commanding officer and his counselors.

No one among the rank and file was able to say with any degree of certitude just what phase of the great campaign was about to be inaugurated.

But because of the fact that orders had been issued for a general inspection of the cavalry brigades when the bugles sounded that May morning, the troopers began to say to each other that some daring raid into the enemy's country was about to be undertaken.

At the same hour, during the inspection of the troopers, a party of six Union scouts entered the camp of General Grant.

Among the scouts rode a man in a tattered, travel-stained suit of Confederate gray. He was young, possessed of a dark Southern face—evidently a rebel soldier, and yet he was not a prisoner.

The Federal scouts, accompanied by the stranger in the uniform of the enemy, rode directly to the headquarters' tent.

Dismounting, the leader lost no time in seeking an audience with the Union general. He was admitted to the presence of the commander as soon as the sentinel on duty at the entrance of the headquarters tent had announced his name.

The manner of the Union scout, as he came into the presence of the general, betrayed that he was laboring under the most intense, repressed excitement.

General Grant and the staff officers saw at once that the scout was evidently the bearer of important, perhaps startling, intelligence.

"Well, what news from between the lines?" asked the commander, as after saluting the scout stood stiffly, waiting permission to speak.

"Beauregard, the rebel general, has fallen back from Welton toward Petersburg. The retreat began just after midnight. The entire Confederate army has been moved rapidly," replied the scout.

General Grant and his officers looked the surprise which this intelligence occasioned them.

"How do you know this? You have not dared to venture as far into the enemy's country as Welton?"

The Union commander spoke with an air of incredulity, which was not unobserved by the scout, who flushed slightly as he answered:

"I have the news from a rebel deserter—an honest man, I am sure, and true to the Union. He was pressed into the Confederate service, but seized the first favorable opportunity

to make for our lines. We picked him up on the old Richmond road ten miles south of camp. But he is here to speak for himself if you wish to question him."

"Certainly—by all means. You may retire, but wait at the door with the deserter until I call for him."

"Yes, general," and the scout again saluted and marched out of the tent.

"Gentlemen," said General Grant, when the tent flap had fallen behind the receding form of the scout, "nothing in the way of news of the enemy's movements could please me better than this. As you know, Beauregard, with an army of forty thousand men, has been guarding Welton along with the Petersburg Railroad in Southern Virginia."

There came a chorus of assent from the officers at hand, and Grant continued:

"The Petersburg Railroad, which runs directly from Petersburg to Welton, is the most important one now in the possession of the enemy, for it is the real connecting link between Virginia and the other seaboard States."

The Union commander shot a meaning glance toward the tent door, pausing but for an instant, and then, while the officers drew nearer the camp table at which he was seated, resumed in lower tones:

"You know my plans. In order to prevent Beauregard from reinforcing Richmond or attacking the Army of the James, I was about to send a strong force of our cavalry riders to strike and destroy the Petersburg Railroad, and thus cut off Beauregard's army."

"And now, general, what change will you make in your plan? Since the enemy has retreated they seem to have deliberately abandoned the Virginia division of the railway to us."

"No time must be lost in getting the cavalry under way. We will strike and destroy the railroad just the same. If we cannot cut Beauregard off from Petersburg, the great rebel supply route shall be destroyed. And now our men can advance boldly, since the enemy has fallen back. But call in the deserter."

An orderly stepped to the tent door in obedience to the request, and returned at once accompanied by the man in Confederate gray, whom we saw arrive with the Union scouts.

"Your name!" said Grant sternly, while he searched the face of the deserter.

"John Hampton, sir," was the ready reply. "I am a deserter from Beauregard's army, but a true Union man, forced for a time to fight under the rebel flag, but anxious to serve the Union."

"So I am told. You have reported the retreat of Beauregard toward Petersburg?"

"Yes, sir."

General Grant went on to question the man at great length. His answers were prompt, and he evinced so much knowledge of the army of the enemy, and spoke so bitterly of his treatment as an impressed Union man in Beauregard's division, that he made an excellent impression.

Grant seemed fully convinced that the man's intelligence was to be relied upon, and when the general had questioned the deserter to his entire satisfaction the latter was allowed to go.

It was understood, however, that he had an important service to immediately perform in the service of the Union.

The deserter had evinced an excellent knowledge of the route between the camp of the army of the Potomac and the line of the Petersburg railroad.

He had agreed to serve as a guide for the Union raiders, and when the deserter left the headquarters tent he was escorted by the scouts to the cavalry camp.

One of Grant's aids accompanied the deserter and the scouts with the general's orders to the cavalry commander to follow the lead of the deserter guide with three thousand of his picked men.

Half an hour later the cavalymen who had so gayly sprang to horse, at the call of "boots and saddles," were riding south, at full speed, with the deserter and a company of a dozen scouts ahead of them.

The dark face of the deserter glowed savagely under the wide brim of his slouched hat. There was a smile of evil triumph upon his saturnine features.

"The plot works. All goes well. The Yankee raiders are doomed. I shall lead them into the jaws of death—into the deadly ambush which Beauregard has set for them. Fools, fools that they are, how readily they credited my story. Too late will come the discovery that they have been decoyed and betrayed," muttered the deserter under his breath.

Meantime, when Grant had sent the fellow, whose monologue has betrayed his real character, to guide the Union troops, the general turned to an orderly and asked in tones of anxiety:

"Is there yet any news of Ned Burton, the boy cavalry scout?"

"No, general, the boy has not yet returned. I fear he has fallen a victim to the rebel bushwhackers, and that he will never come back to bring us the intelligence he went to seek," replied the orderly.

"There is yet a chance that he may come. Perhaps I ought not to have sent the brave boy cavalry scout on such a perilous mission. But he insisted upon going, and, mere boy though he is, he has proved himself a true hero, and more than a match for the rebels in courage and cunning scores of times."

"Yes, general, but never has he gone on such dangerous errand as is now the cause of his absence. You several days ago sent Old Kemp, the strange Union sharpshooter scout and spy, to hunt for the rendezvous of Mosby's dreaded rebel guerrillas, who are devastating the country, plundering and murdering the Unionists of Virginia everywhere. The time for Old Kemp's return has long passed, and Ned Burton, the boy cavalry scout, has gone to solve the mystery of his fate, and also to seek to discover the stronghold of the guerrillas."

"Heaven grant the noble boy may escape all the perils that may environ him. But he and Old Kemp were devoted friends. The boy assured me the old scout had taught him secret signs and signal marks, such as the Indians employ in the far West, to mark their trails for friends to follow. Ned hoped to find such marks to lead him on the route of the old scout. You know Kemp was a Government scout among the Indians in the West before the war, and he is as crafty and cunning as the redskins themselves. It may be that after all Old Kemp is all right, and merely delaying his return for a purpose to serve the Union in some way."

To this view of the situation, in which the general seemed to find considerable satisfaction, the orderly assented a trifle doubtfully.

Just then there came a sound of commotion at the tent door. This was such an unusual occurrence at headquarters that Grant and his orderly started up from the camp table, at which they were seated.

The next moment, thrusting aside the sentinel, a boy darted breathlessly into the tent.

"Ned Burton!" exclaimed the commander, recognizing the daring boy cavalry scout, about whom he had been conversing.

"Yes, general, I have got back at last," panted the boy. "But tell me, is it true you have sent forward a force of only three thousand men to strike the Petersburg road?"

"Yes, it is true, my boy. You see, Beauregard has retreated, so three thousand men will be a sufficient force to tear up the railroad since they will have no fighting to do," said General Grant, smiling complacently.

"What! Good heavens, general, you have been deceived. Beauregard has not retreated! You have sent the little band of only three thousand men to their doom—to the jaws of death!" fairly shouted the excited boy scout, in intense and thrilling tones of the most positive certainty.

General Grant turned pale.

"Do you know Beauregard has not retreated?"

"Yes, yes, I know it. I swear it. I have been close to the rebel lines. But who brought you the intelligence? Who informed you Beauregard had fallen back?" replied the boy.

"A rebel deserter. One who professed to have been compelled to serve in the Confederate ranks against his will."

"His name?"

"He gave the name of John Hampton."

"Was he a tall, dark, saturnine-looking young man?"

"Why, yes. You have described the deserter."

"I thought so. I know the scoundrel. He is Neal Jaffers, the rebel spy."

"What! Have I been thus duped?"

"Yes, general, yes. Neal Jaffers is leading your cavalry raiders into a deadly ambush."

"You have made some discovery of such a plot of the rebels then?"

"I have. Listen, general, and I will tell you all. A few hours ago I was hemmed in by rebel guerrillas at Barnard's Mills, three miles from Suffolk. I had left my horse in an adjacent woods; when I entered the town, despite my disguise of a rebel, I fell under suspicion. Discovering that I was being tracked and watched, I hid in an empty house. Crouching in a wide chimney-place, I listened to the conversation of my pursuers, who entered the house. What did I hear? That one of the band who was engaged in the search for me, and whom his comrades called Neal Jaffers, was to make his way to the Union lines and seek to decoy the cavalry into a rebel ambush by means of a false report. Then I obtained a view of Neal Jaffers. From that moment it was my resolve to try to beat the rebel spy to the Union lines, warn you of his coming, and baffle the Confederate's plot."

Ned Burton paused for breath.

"There is a chance that the cavalry force may be saved yet!" cried General Grant, excitedly.

"Orderly!" he said. "See that at once a party of scouts mounted upon the fastest horses in the camp are sent in pursuit of our cavalry to warn them of the danger signal ahead, and turn them back."

The orderly started for the tent door.

But Ned Burton interposed to detain him, saying, as he did so:

"Hold! Grant me one moment more, general, before you send your aid forth."

"Speak quickly, then, my lad, for now every moment lost may cost precious lives."

"Do not send the scouts in pursuit of the Union cavalry. I have reason to know that outlying bands of Mosby's guerrillas will be concealed along the route. They will not betray their presence to the cavalry, whose force is too great for them, but the scouts will be killed or captured."

"What is to be done then? Those brave men must not go on into the ambush of the rebels. A desperate effort must be made to save them yet."

"General, one rider, mounted on as fleet a horse as can be found in all the South, and experienced as a scout, might dodge the guerrillas, and overtake the Union troopers, while more than one horseman would fail to elude the lurking bushwhackers."

"That is true. But who will undertake this service of deadly peril?"

"I will, general."

"You!"

"Yes, general; I have the fastest running horse in the army—Shooting Star. The old steeplechaser will carry me through the dangerous country if any horse can. Let me go!"

"You shall go. The lives of hundreds—perhaps thousands—are at stake. Dear as you are to me, my noble boy, I will bid you go, and God speed! Now lose not a moment."

"I will not. But one word or two more. I did not find 'Old Kemp,' the missing Union scout. But I did find his trail."

The next moment the boy cavalry scout and the great Union general shook hands at the door of the headquarters tent.

Just without stood a magnificent coal black steed, whose length of limb and perfect symmetrical proportions told of racing blood in his veins.

Ned Burton leaped into the saddle, and waving his hand in farewell salute, gave his horse the rein, and dashed away at wonderful speed.

On, on thundered the noble charger, as if he knew as well as his young rider that he was racing to save a Union army.

CHAPTER II.

THROUGH GUERRILLA AMBUSCADES—THE BOY SCOUT'S LEAP FOR LIFE.

Ned Burton was about seventeen, and as bright, manly, and good-looking a lad as one would wish to see.

He had first joined the army as a drummer boy, but he had soon evinced so much courage that he attracted the attention of "Old Kemp," the trapper scout of the army of the Potomac.

Old Kemp had used his influence, and some months previously Ned had been appointed a cavalry scout to serve with the old trapper.

Since that time the boy had made name and fame, and in the rebel camps many wonderful stories were told of Ned, and he was as much dreaded by the enemy as he was beloved by the Union men.

Ned's mother was a widow in moderate circumstances, residing in Washington, and when she consented to allow Ned to enlist as a drummer boy, she had warned him against one who had been the enemy of the lad's dead father.

That man was Neal Jaffers.

Jaffers had entertained the most bitter hatred against Ned's father, as the boy well knew. But there was no just cause for his enmity. Jaffers, before the outbreak of the war, had fought a duel with a young man who was the bosom friend of Ned's father. The latter had been killed, for Jaffers, like a cowardly assassin, had discharged his pistol before the signal to fire was given. Ned's father had testified against Jaffers when he was brought up for trial, for the former was one of the witnesses of the duel. His evidence had led to Jaffers' conviction. Through political influence the rascal got off with a light sentence, and was soon pardoned.

He had sworn vengeance upon Ned's father.

The latter had been found dead upon a lonely road near Washington ten days after Neal Jaffers' discharge from prison.

Nothing had ever been discovered to connect Neal Jaffers with the crime, and a close investigation seemed to have established that Jaffers was in Richmond at the time of the demise of Ned's father.

The unfortunate man was an army paymaster at the time of his death, which had been occasioned by a bullet wound, and ten thousand dollars in gold which he carried in a leather treasure bag strapped to his saddle was missing. The horse was found in a woods near by, but the money which the dead man had set out to convey to an encampment of the army before Washington, and which was intended to pay the Union soldiers there, had never been found.

On that day of his doom Ned's father was attended only by a large, faithful dog, a mastiff called Bruno. The dog was found seriously wounded in the head, near the body of his dead master, and the indications were that he had engaged in a desperate struggle with the unknown assassin, and got the worst of the encounter.

Ned had carefully attended the wounded dog, and the animal entirely recovered.

When the lad joined the army first he left Bruno at home, but later on, when Ned became a scout, he sent for the dog.

Thereafter the intelligent, well-trained canine had become a valuable assistant to Ned and his comrade, Old Kemp, in their scouting expeditions.

Bruno's keen scent had often given them timely warning of the approach of an enemy, or led them on the trail of a foe which otherwise they would have been unable to find.

Fearing the dog had become so well known to the guerrillas of Virginia that his company had, as a precautionary measure, better be dispensed with on his last scout, Ned had left the animal chained up in camp when he went in search of Old Kemp.

But now, as the daring Union lad was riding away at full speed to save the little army of Union cavalry, he suddenly heard a joyful barking behind him.

The dog had broken his chain, and evidently meant to accompany his young master whether he would or no.

There was no time to turn back with the dog then, the

stake of the race in which Ned was engaged was too great to admit of such a delay.

The boy thought, too, that perhaps his faithful dog might, after all, be of service to him, and so, making the best of the situation, he called out to him cheerily:

"Come along, old fellow. Come along if you will, but I'm afraid Shooting Star will leave you behind before long."

After that Bruno came steadily on after the great black horse. The charger had been assigned to Ned from a consignment of horses from Kentucky, and the boy had early discovered that he had probably been a steeplechaser, at least he had proved to be the greatest leaping horse in the Army of the Potomac.

Then, too, since the animal came into the lad's possession he had trained him to such wonderful leaps that now he sometimes cleared such lofty barriers that Ned did not fear to rush him at any obstacle which it was within the bounds of reason to suppose any horse could surmount.

As the young scout had feared, Shooting Star soon left the dog Bruno out of sight in the rear.

But the lad knew the dog would stick to the trail of the horse, no matter where it might lead him, or how great the distance.

The Union cavalry had a considerable start, but Ned counted on the superior speed of his mount to atone for that.

He was soon in the neighborhood where he knew he might anticipate danger. Barnard's Mills—a small hamlet—was about three miles distant.

Beyond this place a sluggish stream of considerable size flows from the adjacent swamp, through a deep ravine, to form a junction with the Nausemond river.

The route the Union cavalry was taking for the railway that was their objective point, would, as Ned knew, lead them through a place which was naturally well fitted for an ambush.

Approaching the ravine mentioned, the road makes an abrupt turn, winds down into the same, and runs along it.

Both banks are lined with timber that could afford concealment for an overwhelming force of the enemy.

The idea took possession of Ned's mind that at this ravine Ned Jaffers had posted the rebels to slaughter the Union cavalry which he was guiding to their doom.

Of all things, therefore, the boy scout desired to overtake the imperilled troopers before they reached the point which he regarded as the one of most imminent danger.

The miles continued to be swiftly counted off under the flying hoofs of Shooting Star for some time.

Still the boy scout, though he strained his glances eagerly ahead, failed to catch sight of the rear guard of the Union troops.

He was drawing nearer and nearer to the perilous ravine, and it seemed to him that his chances of saving the Union cavalry were momentarily decreasing, when, all at once, as he was dashing through a little belt of timber, half a dozen rough looking men, well mounted and armed, rode out into the highway before him.

Ned knew at a glance the men were rebel guerrillas. He was clad in citizen's garb, but he carried a repeating carbine slung at his shoulders, and a pair of cavalry revolvers were in his holsters.

The heroic lad set his teeth determinedly, and without decreasing his speed in the least, or drawing a weapon, he rode right at the horsemen in the road.

To be halted now meant doom for the brave Union men Ned sought to save.

But it was clearly the purpose of the guerrillas to stop him.

"Halt!" shouted the leader of the band in ringing tones, and the rifles of the guerrillas were leveled at Ned.

But he threw himself along one side of his horse, making use of an Indian trick Old Kemp had taught him, and then, as he did not heed the order to halt, a fusillade of rifle balls hurtled over the back of his horse.

Ned had "ducked" just in time.

Shooting Star went through the guerrilla band like a flash, and thundered on, rounded a bend in the road and left the enemy behind.

Ned heard the sounds of their pursuers, and he urged his horse to make a final spurt.

At the same time he reflected that the report of the guerrillas' rifles must have been heard a long distance ahead, and he feared the sound might serve to place other enemies on the alert to intercept him.

The apprehensions of the young scout proved to be well founded.

It seemed the route he had to traverse was destined to become a veritable death gauntlet for the brave lad.

He had struck into a long stretch of straight road, fringed here and there by clumps of trees and bushes, and he had just caught sight of the guerrillas he had left behind coming in sight in the distance, when he made a thrilling discovery ahead.

Once more the way was closed against him.

A file of a score of rebel infantry, whose glittering guns and fixed bayonets shone in the sunlight, marched out of a growth of trees a short distance ahead.

From the rear rang out the voice of the leader of the guerrillas, as he shouted in triumphant tones:

"Stop him—he is a Yankee spy!"

At sight of the men he must pass Ned had thought to attempt a ruse, and try to get by them in the character of a Southern citizen and a good rebel.

But the guerrilla's denunciation forestalled this plan of the lad's. It seemed he must now surely fall into the hands of the enemy.

To leave the highway would be to enter the swamp, of which mention had been made, and through which the road now ran. Once in the morass his capture would be a certainty, for there his horse could find no secure footing.

The twenty rebel soldiers completely closed the road spreading out from one of the steep banks that bordered it to the other.

The rebels leveled their fixed bayonets, holding their guns at a charge to repel the cavalry.

They were perfectly sure of Ned's capture, and the captain in command of the squad called out to him:

"We've got you now, you infernal young Yank!"

But Ned made no answer.

Instead, with a rousing shout, he rushed his black steeple-chaser straight at the barricade of living foes and glittering, deadly bayonets.

CHAPTER III.

NED AND JEFFERS FACE TO FACE—THE GREATEST PERIL OF ALL.

The boy scout's wonderful leaping horse had again saved him. Shooting Star alighted safely beyond the line of rebels and dashed on.

The amazed and completely surprised Confederates wheeled about and sent a volley of bullets in pursuit of the Union lad as soon as they recovered their presence of mind sufficiently to do so.

But the fusillade went wide of the young scout and his horse, and he continued his rapid flight unharmed.

The infantrymen being on foot were unable to inaugurate an effectual pursuit, and again Ned obtained a start while the mounted guerrillas were riding up to the rebel soldiers.

Not more than two miles ahead Ned knew that a bridle path struck off through the woods at the edge of the swamp land. He and Old Kemp had previously discovered and traversed the path, finding that it was a short cut leading to the neighborhood of the ravine, where Ned anticipated the rebels were in ambush.

Reaching the entrance of the bridle-path, Ned turned into it, resolved to avail himself of it to decrease the distance to be traversed.

He was soon in the depths of the woods, where, even during the hours of sunlight, the shadows fell gloomily, and the damp, dark thickets bordered the way.

Ned had left the guerrillas out of sight in the rear when he entered the pathway, and he hoped they might pass on along the road without discovering the way he had followed.

Presently Ned caught the sound of discharged firearms in the distance. The detonations emanated from the direction in which he was advancing, and they occasioned him a feeling of consternation. He feared that already the ambushed enemy might have attacked the vanguard of the Union cavalry.

It was exceedingly disheartening to think that after all his heroic struggles in their behalf he was to overtake the Union cavalry too late.

Ned strove to increase the speed of his horse, but the noble animal was already doing his utmost, and he could not further accelerate his pace.

Suddenly the youthful scout drew rein so abruptly that his horse was thrown back upon his haunches.

The sounds of coming horsemen in the path ahead had all at once come to Ned's hearing.

It was a question whether the approaching riders were friends or foes, but it would not do to take any chances, and Ned quickly rode aside among the thickets.

The horsemen came on, and catching a glimpse of them, Ned saw they were a band of dozen rebel scouts. A moment and the boy caught the sound of other men in the timber. He heard signal calls, and answers from several directions, and the alarming conviction came to his mind that scattered companies of the rebel scouts were beating the timber.

The voices of the men on the bridle-path reached his hearing quite distinctly as they rode by.

"I tell you, men, the old Yankee scout in the coonskin cap entered this woods," said one of the Confederates.

"Then we'll run him down yet; the boys are scattered everywhere through the timber. The old Yank can't long escape. Mosby has sworn he shall not reach the Union lines, for he has discovered the great secret of the hidden rendezvous of the Confederate free raiders," replied another of the party.

"Heavens! Mosby's cutthroats have run Old Kemp into the woods, and they are hunting him as if he was a wild beast!" muttered Ned excitedly, for the mention of the fact that the Union scout the guerrillas were pursuing wore a coonskin cap gave the boy the positive assurance of his identity.

Ned began to pick his way along in the timber, keeping near the bridle path. Much valuable time was now lost. Once or twice he narrowly escaped discovery by different bands of Mosby's men, and he had to halt in a thicket more than once.

All at once, as he rode out of a dense forest growth, a startling scene burst upon his vision. In an opening on the bank of a deep dark lagoon of the adjacent swamp he saw a man running as if for life, pursued by eight rebel guerrillas. The fugitive was roughly clad, evidently a man of advanced years, and he wore a coonskin cap.

"Old Kemp!" uttered the boy scout, recognizing his veteran comrade.

The next instant the guerrillas discharged a volley of shots at the Union fugitive, and with a terrible cry he leaped into the air and plunged headlong down the steep bank into the dark waters of the lagoon.

The guerrillas dashed up and drew rein on the bank of the lagoon. They looked down into the dark waters that had closed over Old Kemp, and Ned heard one of them shout:

"The old Yank is done for. We riddled him with buckshot. I reckon he's at the bottom of the lagoon!"

"Yes, and so Mosby's secret is still safe. The only Yank who ever found his retreat was the old fellow we have shot," replied another.

Then the guerrillas rode on, sending signal calls to inform their scattered comrades of the fact that the fugitive had been hunted down.

Ned resumed his way sorrowfully, and he mentally vowed that the murder of the old scout should yet be avenged, if his services against them could avail to such an end.

A few minutes subsequently the boy heard a crash sound in the bushes behind him, and whipping out a revolver he wheeled in the saddle expecting to confront a foe.

But out of the cover bounded Bruno, his faithful dog. The devoted animal had stuck to his trail and the delays the lad had encountered gave the dog time to overtake him.

The delighted dog frisked and bounded about the black horse, but with a word or two Ned quieted him, and rode onward.

One of his saddle girths became loosened before he had gone but a short distance. Having dismounted in a thicket, he was in the act of buckling the strap, when Bruno gave an alarm by crouching and uttering a fierce, low growl.

"Someone comes," said Ned, mentally.

Peering cautiously through the intervening foliage he saw a solitary man in a tattered suit of Confederate gray.

Ned drew back, startled and surprised.

The man he had discovered was Neal Jaffers. He was on foot, and seemed to be following a trail.

The ensuing instant Bruno saw the rebel, and while the hair on the animal's neck bristled up and he evinced anger, he made a tremendous leap clear of the thicket. Uttering a terrible howl the animal sprang furiously at Neal Jaffer's throat.

Ned had vainly sought to detain the dog. Never before had the faithful animal thus refused to obey his master. Ned could not understand it.

Neal Jaffers turned pale as death at the sight of the great dog, and while he sought to defend himself against the attack of the infuriated beast, he shouted in tones of mortal dread and terror:

"Merciful heaven! The dog I thought I left dead on the lonely Washington road!"

Hearing those words, Ned Burton staggered back against a tree as though the weight of the startling discovery he had made caused him to reel.

"At last! at last! I have found out the truth! Neal Jaffers is my father's murderer!" uttered the boy scout in hollow tones.

He comprehended that the sagacity of the dog had enabled the animal to identify the man who had left him for dead beside his murdered master.

Despite Neal Jaffers' resistance Bruno had fastened his teeth in the rebel assassin's shoulder.

Ned was about to rush forward, but just as he was clear of the timber he stumbled and fell.

Still struggling with the dog, Neal Jaffers saw Ned Burton.

Though to Jaffers' knowledge he and the boy had never met previously, the striking resemblance which the lad bore to his dead father caused a conviction of Ned's identity to instantly flash upon the mind of the assassin. The expression upon the lad's face had at one glance revealed to the guilty man that Ned suspected his secret of crime.

Neal Jaffers had not as yet, during the struggle with the dog, succeeded in drawing a weapon, but now with a desperate effort he succeeded in jerking a revolver from the holster in his belt where it seemed to have caught.

As Ned regained his feet, Jaffers leveled his weapon in his left hand, and aimed at the boy.

The next instant Jaffers pressed the trigger, but the dog dragged him aside a trifle at the same time and the bullet whizzed by Ned's head.

He felt the wind of the leaden ball, and leaping behind a tree drew his own weapon.

Just then, as a desperate duel seemed about to be commenced between Ned and his foe, a party of bushwackers came rushing out of the timber beyond Jaffers.

They had been near when the latter discharged his weapon, and the report of his pistol had drawn them hastily to the spot.

At sight of the enemy, Ned rushed for his horse and leaped upon his back, at the same time shouting to the dog to follow.

As if he realized that the odds were now too greatly against him, Bruno released his hold upon Jaffers and bounded after Ned, as he dashed away. Jaffers tried to shoot the dog, but failed, and he shouted to the guerrillas:

"After him, men! He is Grant's boy cavalry scout!"

The ensuing moment Ned was once more riding for his life, hotly pursued.

But he was leaving the guerrillas behind, when, unfortunately, Shooting Star stumbled into a deserted rifle-pit, and, unhorsed by the shock, the young scout was hurled far over the animal's head.

Ned scrambled to his feet immediately. He was pretty well shaken up, but no bones were fractured. The guerrillas were pressing nearer and nearer and Ned knew that his only chance for escape depended upon his getting his horse out of the rifle-pit in time.

The horse of the young scout was uninjured, and leaping down into the rifle-pit, Ned sought to make him leap out of it. Shooting Star was never in such a situation. The steep banks of the rifle-pit were close around him on all sides. Vainly Ned sought to get the animal out of the trap.

Just then a tremendous volley of musketry rang out from the direction of the ravine some miles ahead. Ned feared the massacre of the Union cavalry had already begun there. A moment and the guerrillas came thundering up to the rifle-pit.

CHAPTER IV.

NED STARTS UPON A DANGEROUS TRAIL.

Ned Burton met the charge of the guerrillas with a volley from his revolvers, while he continued to urge his horse to further efforts to extricate himself from the rifle-pit.

The boy cavalry scout had well nigh abandoned all hope of escape, and how great was his despair we may compre-

hend, to some extent, when we consider the magnitude of the calamity.

The spirit of innate chivalry and noble heroism that had prompted the Union boy to volunteer for the dangerous duty that had brought him into this deadly peril still inspired him.

Ned yet desired, of all things, to save the Union cavalry, as we know, and as the tremendous volley of musketry rang out from the direction of the defile ahead, where he anticipated the enemy had set their ambush, the lad made a last determined effort to get Shooting Star out of the rifle-pit.

That time the boy was successful.

The steeple-chaser scrambled up the side of the rifle-pit, and the succeeding moment, throwing himself alongside of the horse, Ned was dashing away at full speed.

Bruno, Ned's faithful dog, followed the headlong flight of Shooting Star and his daring young rider.

The guerrillas sent a shower of bullets hurtling after the fugitive, and Neal Jaffers, the rebel decoy, came running forward shouting excitedly:

"Take him dead or alive, men. He is Grant's boy spy, and one of the most dangerous foes of the South. We have done for Old Kemp, the Yankee scout, let's make an end of the old rascal's boy partner."

The guerrillas were willing and anxious enough to capture Ned without Neal Jaffers' admonition, and they immediately inaugurated a pursuit of the boy.

The latter, however, quickly distanced his foes, and as if he bore a charmed life, the bullets whistled around him harmlessly.

In a short time Ned regained the highway which he had left, and then he saw a sight that occasioned him the greatest satisfaction.

The road was filled with the Union cavalry. They were pulling back from the ravine beyond Barnard's Mills. Ned joined the force as quickly as possible, and urged his horse toward the rear, whence he heard an irregular firing.

Meeting the colonel in command of the Union force, Ned hastened to make known the peril of the situation, and the orders of General Grant for a retreat.

"The advance scouts discovered the enemy in the ravine, while we crossed the hills yonder. We made a halt, and only the scouts were thrown forward. The deserter guide rather mysteriously disappeared at the time of the discovery of the enemy," replied the officer.

Only the scouts were now engaged with the rebels, covering the retreat of the Union cavalry. Evidently the Confederates did not, as yet, comprehend that the bluecoats had really begun a retreat, or they would have followed them.

"The scouts must be called in. We shall go on the double-quick now. Will you carry the order to the rear guard to fall back?" asked the colonel.

"Yes, colonel," responded the boy cavalry scout, and a moment subsequently he was again advancing toward the point of greatest danger.

The young cavalry scout reached the men who were covering the retreat of the Union army, and turned them back. Then as Ned himself was riding on the return, he heard the scouts talking of the absence of six men who had been with the false guide, far ahead of all the rest of the Union force.

"Ah," thought the lad, "it must be that Neal Jaffers led those brave boys into a trap. Heaven help them if they are in the hands of the guerrillas."

Just then Ned observed that his dog Bruno was evincing certain signs which he could not mistake the meaning of. The boy and the dog had so often followed a rebel trail with Old Kemp the trapper scout of the Shenandoah, that the lad now knew Bruno had struck a trail.

The dog turned off from the road into one of the numerous paths leading into the woods. He came bounding back, uttering urgent barks, and again disappeared. It was the intelligent animal's way of saying to his young master:

"Follow me!"

Ned now heard the clatter of the rebel troops, who were advancing from the defile after the retreating Federals. At last the rebels seemed to have discovered that the Union men were really in full retreat.

"Bruno is doing his best to lead me into the path. I never knew the dog's sagacity to be at fault. He'll not guide me into an ambush. I'll risk being able to rejoin our cavalry later on and follow the dog," said the lad.

He disappeared in the forest path which Bruno had entered just as the rebel cavalry came in sight down the highway. But the brave boy was not seen by the enemy.

"Hello! What's this?" exclaimed Ned, as he caught sight of something white fluttering from a bush beside the path at some distance further on.

At a second glance Ned saw the object which attracted his attention was really a scrap of paper thrust through the sharp spines of the bush to which it had adhered.

Bending low in the saddle as he reined up his horse, Ned reached the paper and found that upon it a few lines of writing had been scribbled in pencil.

Ned gave a start of surprise as he read the communication on the paper.

It ran as follows:

"Six Union scouts, myself among the party, have been betrayed into the power of a strong band of Mosby's guerrillas by the deserter sent to guide us. We are being marched toward Mosby's secret camp, as I gather from the bushwhackers, there to be put to death in revenge for the death of the two guerrilla spies our general had shot in Suffolk last week. If this comes into the hands of any Union man, let him see it reaches the Union commander, that he may know our fate.

"(Signed) JACK BARTON."

"This is too bad, Jack Barton, and the five companions of his who have been led into the hands of the vindictive guerrillas are all brave, true men and my comrades. Neal Jaffers has lured them to their doom," reflected Ned.

Then suddenly, as if speaking with the inspiration of a second thought:

"But Bruno is on the trail of the captured Unionists. Ha! I've an idea for a great attempt. The scout's note says that the Union prisoners are being taken to Mosby's secret retreat. By all that's lucky, aided by Bruno, I may be able to trail the guerrillas to the hidden rendezvous of Mosby; I'll try it."

A less brave and adventurous spirit might have been deterred from the perilous undertaking. But Ned was a real young hero.

He thought, as he rode forward, led by the dog trailer, that he would take any risk to solve the secret of Mosby's hiding-place, and he meant, too, that if circumstances favored him in the least he would try to save the six devoted Union men who were doomed to an unjust fate.

Mosby was the terror of all the Unionists in Virginia, and he had harassed the Union army much by cutting off small supply trains, picking off pickets, and acting as scout and forager for the enemy.

The Union troopers had chased Mosby's guerrillas a score of times but the mounted desperadoes had always managed to elude pursuit and disappear with a speed and mystery about their movements that led the Federals to the conclusion that the guerrillas availed themselves of a retreat, the secret of which thus far eluded all the Union scouts.

General Grant wished more ardently to capture Mosby and his band, and some time previously he had offered a large reward for the discovery of the bushwhacker's hiding-place.

Ned thought he would be doing the Union cause a great service if he could find the stronghold of the guerrillas.

"I'll do my best," muttered the boy. "The arch villain murdered Old Kemp, who, by their own admission, was the only Union man who ever discovered their hiding-place. Neal Jaffers and his traitor comrades think their secret is buried with my old scout comrade in the dark waters of the swamp bayou. But, Heaven helping me, I will find out the secret and complete the task of the brave heart who lost his life trying to take back the news to the Union lines."

In silence, but constantly alert and watchful, Ned rode on after that low-voiced monologue expressive of his heroic resolutions.

Bruno was never at fault. Silently the trained dog-scout went on the trail, and he never once gave tongue.

Ned had followed the dog for a distance of some miles when he caught the sound of a rapidly approaching horse. The animal was coming over the route Ned had just traversed.

With a low signal call, the Union lad brought Bruno to his side, and then turning Shooting Star in a cover, he waited the appearance of the coming rider.

He proved to be a young Confederate orderly, as one glance told Ned.

It seemed as though he inadvertently played directly into Ned's hands, for, as he rode by, the Union boy heard him say to himself disconsolately:

"Just my luck. Here the general has sent me off with important dispatches for Mosby, just when we are likely to have a battle with the Yankees, and I might have had a chance to distinguish myself."

"He's my game. I must have those dispatches!" said Ned, mentally.

He drew a cavalry revolver, touched his horse with the spur, and the gallant steed, at one leap, bounded out into the pathway before the rebel courier.

"Halt!" shouted Ned, with his revolver leveled at the head of the young orderly.

The latter pulled up instantly.

"I want the dispatches you are carrying to Mosby," demanded Ned.

The courier tried to parley and make denials, but he ended by handing Ned a letter addressed to "Colonel John Mosby," and signed by the Confederate commander, Beauregard.

After that the Union lad compelled the young rebel to dismount, and Ned made some surprising preparations, looking to the great work of rescue and discovery he had resolved upon.

CHAPTER V.

IN THE SECRET RETREAT OF MOSBY'S GUERRILLAS.

In the shadow of the lofty ledge, among the mountains of Virginia, where a view of the surrounding country could be obtained, crouched a roughly-dressed man with a rifle in his hands.

The alert and watchful air of the solitary man on the mountain-side might readily have led to the inference that he was a sentinel on duty.

Such, in truth, was his character.

The faded gray coat and slouched hat and the dark face under it would have served to convey to a most casual observer that he was a Southern man and a Confederate.

It was some hours since the daring boy cavalry scout of the Union army stopped the dispatch-bearer of General Beauregard on the woods trail, down the valley.

All at once the solitary mountain guard raised his rifle and glanced down a steep descent where creeping vines almost hid the trail.

He had caught the sound of hoofs on the rocky way.

"Someone comes! Ah, a messenger from the general," muttered the sentinel.

Through the intervening foliage he had caught sight of a young horseman, clad in the uniform of a rebel orderly or aid.

"Halt!" the command came sternly from the lips of the mountain sentinel, as a moment subsequently the approaching horseman rode out into full view of him.

The long rifle in the hands of the man in gray was leveled to give force to his command.

"I am a friend. I came from General Beauregard with dispatches for Colonel Mosby," came the answer of the young orderly, but he promptly drew rein.

The speaker was Ned Burton. The boy cavalry scout had come to attempt his daring ruse. He had compelled the rebel orderly to surrender his horse and uniform as well as his dispatches.

Having left the orderly bound and gagged in a thicket, where he had also secured "Shooting Star," still guided by the dog, Ned had continued on.

He did not deem it possible that any of the guerrillas were sufficiently familiar with his personal appearance to recognize his features.

The sentinel scanned the boy scout keenly for a moment, and then he put his fingers to his lips and blew a signal whistle.

In a few moments two men, who resembled the sentinel in general appearance, came in sight further up the steep ascent.

"Here's an orderly from Beauregard with a message. Take him to Colonel John, boys," said the sentinel to his comrades, as they appeared at his signal.

Then, lowering his gun, he stood aside and allowed Ned to ride on. The boy experienced a strange and thrilling sensation, but it was not fear. He knew he was riding into the secret rendezvous of the dreaded guerrilla chief—that he had well-nigh penetrated a secret that had cost many valuable lives.

The situation was one which assuredly might well have

caused the bravest—most heroic spirit—some trepidation. It was like riding into the jaws of death.

Detection meant certain doom.

Guided by the two men, whom the guard had called, the Union boy rode up through a rock-bound tunnel. Then there was a sharp descent, and he found himself entering a wooded plateau.

Ned's eyes brightened as he saw that surely, at last, the mysterious hiding-place of the lawless marauders of Virginia was before him.

The lad did not wonder that this eerie mountain rendezvous had so long escaped discovery by the Union men, when he reflected how desirous and well concealed had been the trail leading to it, which only the sagacity of his dog had enabled him to follow.

The tents and rude huts of the bushwhackers were scattered about all over the plateau, and their horses were picketed at its northern end.

To the west the camp was secured against invasion by a steep ledge of rocks which could not be scaled by horsemen, and only perilous climbing could enable a footman to accomplish its ascent.

The great Confederate guerrilla chief was pacing thoughtfully to and fro before his tent, and Ned rode straight up to him and, saluting, said:

"I come from General Beauregard. Here is a dispatch for you, colonel."

Thus speaking the boy placed the dispatches he had taken from the Confederate orderly in Mosby's hands. The latter ordered Ned's horse to be cared for, ordered the latter to be furnished some refreshments, and then deliberately turned to the examination of the dispatches.

The portrait one might naturally have drawn of Mosby from his reputation was not borne out in his actual appearance.

Ned saw a man who at sight would have struck him as being more than ordinary. He was rather smaller than one might have expected, but full of sinewy strength. His face was pleasant, but there was an air of firmness about it.

Scanning Mosby with the keenest interest while he perused Beauregard's dispatches, Ned began to credit him with qualifications for a leader which had escaped his first glance.

But the ensuing moment the Union boy started as if he had suddenly made a thrilling discovery.

Just then a young girl had issued forth from a cabin nearby.

At one glance Ned recognized her as an old and admired friend of "before the war."

She resided with her widowed father on a fine Virginia plantation, situated in a part of the state yet inside the rebel lines, and her name was Mildred Hastings.

Since the war broke out, Ned had not seen or heard from Mildred directly. But he knew it was reported that the young girl and her father were most bitter rebels.

Ned's heart almost stood still as he thought the rebel girl in the guerrilla camp had recognized him.

He saw that she had positively identified him, as the expression of her beautiful brunette face conveyed the dread intelligence as plainly as words the next instant.

A cold sweat broke out upon Ned's brow.

He could not expect the rebel girl to shield him.

He thought she must now look upon him as a foe—as one of "the hated Yankee mudsills, who had come to despoil the South."

"Merciful heaven! was there ever such an unfortunate incident as this? If that girl speaks I am doomed. If she utters my name I shall never leave the guerrillas' camp alive," thought Ned.

As the appalling reflection traversed his excited mind he became aware of the fact that Mosby had raised his eyes from the dispatch and was regarding him keenly.

Ned's heart gave a great leap as he saw Mildred Hastings turn and re-enter the cabin whence she had come, without speaking.

He was completely mystified by the conduct of the rebel girl. He could have sworn she had recognized. But if so, why had she not denounced him? He had no time to reflect upon the puzzle.

Mosby, speaking in a stern, imperative manner, immediately addressed him.

"Young man, you appear to be very ill at ease. Let me see, your name is—is——" and Mosby paused as if his memory was at fault.

"Martin Way, sir," replied the boy. "You see, colonel, I have just been appointed one of General Beauregard's aides."

"I thought I had never seen you before."

"And I have never had the honor to meet you before, colonel. I came from Greensboro, North Carolina. My father was the late Judge Wallace Way."

Ned's assumption of frankness and sincerity was complete. He seemed to have disarmed the suspicion which his uneasy manner might have occasioned the guerrilla chief.

"I know the Ways of North Carolina are a true Southern family, my lad, and I am glad to know you," replied Mosby.

Just then one of the guerrilla men came up and said:

"Colonel, Brox's band has not got in yet. I'm afraid the Yankees have caught them."

"I hope not. Brox had positive orders to return by more than two hours ago, and I confess it does look as if he was in trouble. But a dozen Yankees shall die for every one of my brave men the Yankees execute."

"Bravo, colonel! But I came also to report that everything is ready for the execution of the six Yankee scouts."

"Very well, lieutenant; march them out to the gallows-tree and call all hands," replied the guerrilla chief.

Ned turned pale as death.

"Oh, am I to fail after all? Is no time or opportunity to be granted me to save these brave men?" thought the Union lad, as he heard Mosby's cold-blooded order.

The next moment he heard a voice, the sound of which gave him the knowledge that he was in imminent peril of sharing the fate of the doomed scouts himself.

CHAPTER VI.

A MOMENT OF SUSPENSE AND PERIL.

The voice which alarmed Ned was that of Neal Jaffers, the rebel spy and decoy of the guerrillas.

Ned saw Jaffers ride into the camp alone, and the villain urged his horse straight toward the bushwhacker chief and the boy. The latter turned his head away and drew his gloves, besmirched with powder, across his face, while he pulled his Confederate hat further down over his eyes.

The appearance of the Union boy was so completely changed by the uniform he wore that Jaffers took him for what he seemed to be, and without bestowing a second glance upon him, said to Mosby hurriedly:

"Brox and his party are in the hands of the Yankees. They gobbled up the little band in the wood north of Barnard's Mills, and I have had a narrow escape. The Yankees took the alarm before I had quite led them into Beauregard's ambush."

"Grant has adopted the plan of reprisal by hanging the last men of mine he captured inside his lines, and you have come just in time to witness my revenge, Jaffers," said Mosby.

"Look yonder!" he added.

Following with their glances the direction which the guerrilla leader indicated the Union boy cavalry scout and the rebel spy saw a thrilling and terrible sight.

Out of a long rude shed the guerrillas were marching the six doomed Union prisoners.

The unfortunate men marched two by two, with their hands chained together.

The boy scout recognized one of the first couples as the author of the message that had served to acquaint him with the capture of the party.

But none of the scouts marching to the ignominious doom, which the merciless guerrillas had decreed for them, recognized Ned, nor did he wish that they should do so.

"That's right. Swing them up. Swing up the infernal Yankees! It serves them right for coming to rob and plunder in the South. Yes, give the nigger-worshippers the rope," said Jaffers, in exultation and approval of the verdict of the prisoners' doom.

Some fifty feet from the edge of the precipice, which was the western boundary of the guerrilla camp, stood a forest monarch, whose patriarchal limbs, wide-spreading and numerous, extended in every direction.

Upon this tree more than one poor captive whose only crime was his love for the old flag, had been his doom, and now over its limbs dangled six stout ropes, in the end of which was a noose of death.

Everything was in readiness for this awful wholesale execution.

Ned felt that he could do nothing.

He saw the doomed men marched under the several nooses. He witnessed the final preparations of the executioners, and at last he turned away as he thought Mosby was about to give the command to launch the doomed men into eternity.

But a horseman at that most critical moment in the fate of the doomed men came riding swiftly into camp.

"Stop that thar hangin' bee! Stop ther stringin' up! Stop it, I say!" shouted the new arrival, swinging his hat as he came on.

The man was clad in a well-worn Confederate uniform, and he wore a full beard and mustache. Little more than the eyes were visible in his face, owing to the beard.

"Who are you, and what do you mean by shouting commands in my camp? I am John Mosby, and I am the only one who issues orders here," replied the guerrilla chief.

"Beg your pardon, colonel. I'm King Bittern, of the Tenth Virginia Volunteers, just released from the care o' a Yankee guard and sent to carry ye a message from old Grant. Ye see I was cotched down by the ravine. Here's the message from the Yankee general."

"Now I look at you I see you are King Bittern sure enough. You were a scout of Beauregard's and have been here on business before to-day," said Mosby, while the new arrival handed him a written document. "Hello! Ha! listen to this," cried Mosby, when he had hastily perused the paper.

He read as follows, while the doomed Union men listened as though they believed their lives hung upon his words:

"Headquarters of Gen. U. S. Grant, Commander-in-Chief, U. S. A.

"To John Mosby: Sir—It having come to my knowledge that you have taken six of my scouts, I hereby warn you that I will hang Brox and all his party who are my prisoners, if you fail to treat my men as honorable prisoners of war. If you choose, I will exchange prisoners, man for man.

"(Signed) U. S. GRANT."

"Well, boys, this looks as though the infernal Yankee general was in real earnest. There are twenty men in Brox's party. I can't afford to lose them. March the prisoners back to the shed," ordered Mosby.

Ned felt like shouting.

The doomed men, so suddenly respited, almost broke down under the revulsion of feeling they experienced.

Jaffers walked away with Mosby, and no one seemed for the time to pay any attention to Ned. He was leaning against a great tree at the edge of the camp, when all at once the young girl, Mildred Hastings, came swiftly toward him.

"Ned Burton, I know you. I recognized you when you first entered the camp," said the beautiful Southern girl.

"Would you betray me? Would you doom an old friend of former days to certain death?" replied Ned, knowing a denial of his identity would be useless.

As he spoke he looked into the dark, glowing face beside him, as if seeking to read the very soul of the girl who held his fate in her hands.

She met his searching glance frankly, and said quickly:

"Do you think I could betray you to death? Oh, have you so bad an opinion of me as that?"

"I know you are a rebel. I am an enemy of the South. We are foes. I did not know that I could hope for mercy at your hands."

"Ned," replied the young girl earnestly, "you are wrong. I am heart and soul in sympathy with the North. I love the old flag and the Union!"

"What! But no, you are receiving me."

"I speak the truth."

"I have always heard that you and your family were the most bitter rebels."

"I can explain that. You know my father's character. How he values his wealth? Well, he has been only acting a part. He has been deceiving the rebels. At heart he and all our family are Unionists. But our property would have been taken from us. Our home would have been destroyed if we had not concealed our real sentiments. Oh, Ned! we are not the only family in this benighted Southern land who dare not reveal our real sentiments."

The young girl spoke in low tones, but there was that in her manner, as much as in her words, that seemed to convince the boy cavalry scout of her sincerity.

"I believe you, Mildred, and I thank heaven that in you I

have found a friend instead of a foe, as I thought," he replied.

"Your friend always," she replied, and she gave him one little hand confidently.

As he held it he asked:

"But what are you doing here—here in the camp of the dreaded rebel guerrillas?"

"Oh, Ned, I am in a terrible situation. It may be you are to help me—to save me from a fate worse than death."

"What do you mean? Why, Mildred, you are trembling from head to foot!"

"Ned, I have a secret to tell you—a strange, dark mystery to reveal. I will trust you—I know you are good and true."

"Yes, Mildred—dear Mildred."

The girl was about to speak further, when from the shadows in the rear of the great tree that had screened his approach from their sight, Neal Jaffers suddenly leaped out before them.

"I have heard all. I know you now, Ned Burton, you infernal Yankee spy!" cried the rebel.

Ned seemed for a moment to have turned to stone as he stood staring at his father's assassin.

The boy realized that his enemy was triumphant at last.

Mildred, white as death, clung to Ned.

"Lost! Oh, Ned, who will save me now?" uttered the young girl, wailingly.

CHAPTER VII.

DISGUISED MAN SHOWS HIS HAND.

It seemed that the despairing words of the young Southern maiden, who had just intrusted him with the secret that her sympathies were with the Union, acted as the inspiration for prompt action on Ned's part.

Suddenly he made a tremendous leap, and hurled himself straight at the throat of his vindictive rebel foe.

The lad was swift to comprehend that it was now the one essential of vital importance, that he should prevent Neal Jaffers alarming the guerrilla camp.

One shout from the rebel spy and decoy would bring all of Mosby's cut-throats down upon Ned.

The only chance for the preservation of the brave lad lay in his preventing the revelation of the secret of his identity, which Jaffers meant now to make known to Mosby and his men.

Neal Jaffers' lips had parted, and the words which he meant should announce to the inmates of the camp that the boy was a Union spy were about to be uttered, when Ned leaped at him.

The hands of the lad fastened upon the throat of Neal Jaffers in a tenacious hold, and the succeeding moment the two were struggling desperately upon the earth.

The trees and intervening bushes screened them from the sight of the main portion of the guerrilla camp, and they were not observed as yet by any of Mosby's men.

Ned exerted all his strength to prevent the utterance of the alarm he dreaded.

Mildred Hastings, pale and terror-stricken, reeled back against a tree, wringing her hands despairingly, as she thought the doom of the brave Union boy was assured.

At that moment of supreme peril Ned Burton wished earnestly for the presence of his dog. But he had left Bruno at the foot of the hill when he caught sight of the guerrilla picket. The boy knew his wonderful dog would remain where he had left him for any reasonable length of time.

Neal Jaffers was a muscular man, in the full strength of maturity, while Ned, though strong for his years, lacked the muscular development which comes only with the accession of years.

The boy cavalry scout soon felt that his strength was failing, and the realization came to his mind like a knell of fate that he had undertaken what he could not accomplish—that Neal Jaffers was to become the victor in the terrible hand-to-hand struggle.

Weaker and weaker grew Ned's efforts, and Neal Jaffers succeeded in compelling the boy to release his hold upon his throat.

Then the rebel spy could have called assistance, but he no longer cared to do so. Confident that he should almost immediately overpower Ned, and prompted by his vanity to seek the glory of the lad's capture and unmasking single-handed, he did not utter an alarm.

The end of the unequal contest between the rebel and Union boy seemed presently to have come.

Ned was held upon his back, the knee of his foe was planted upon his breast, and his hands clutched the boy's throat, while his blazing eyes, scintillating vindictive light, flashed down into the upturned face of the boy scout.

"Conquered—conquered at last, and you shall never leave John Mosby's camp alive," uttered Jaffers, fiercely.

Ned was powerless to make a reply. He thought that the fiat of destiny had gone forth against him and that soon he would be conducted to the gallows-tree from which the Union scouts had been reprieved at the last moment.

At the moment of Ned Jaffers' triumph Mildred Hastings turned faint as death, and she would have fallen at the foot of the great tree, where she had stood enthralled by Ned's peril, but for the timely aid of a pair of stout arms.

Suddenly a man in the Confederate uniform, who had come swiftly and silently upon the scene, stepped out from behind the tree.

He caught the young girl in his arms just as she was slipping to the ground. Depositing her gently upon the mountain moss at the foot of the tree, the man crept toward the rebel spy and his boy adversary.

Neal Jaffers' back was now turned toward the great tree whence the man came, and therefore the rebel was ignorant of his approach. Strangely enough, the man in Confederate uniform seemed desirous of taking Jaffers by surprise.

Ned Burton had not yet lost the power of vision, though the dreadful sensation of strangulation he began to experience somewhat blurred his sight.

The lad saw the man in gray stealing up behind Neal Jaffers and wondered at the fellow's conduct, for he was one of the enemy.

Ned recognized the stealthily approaching man. He was King Bittern—the rebel who had brought the message from General Grant.

"I can hope nothing from that rascal," thought Ned.

But almost the ensuing instant the imperiled boy was amazed and delighted by a mysterious and thrilling procedure on the part of the fellow called "King Bittern."

The latter, having crept up close behind Jaffers, undetected, suddenly clubbed a revolver which he carried in his hand, and brought it down upon the head of Ned's foe.

The blow sounded with a thud, which told it had fallen with great force upon the skull of Jaffers. He let go his hold upon Ned, and pitched forward upon his face beside the boy. There he remained motionless.

"Knocked ther critter clean out! Redskins an' rattlesnakes, yes! Shouldn't wonder much if I'd cracked his skull. But here comes some o' his friends. I'm off with the critter. He mustn't be seen by the bushwhackers."

The man who had so opportunely felled the rebel spy suddenly lifted the fallen villain in his powerful arms and glided away into the bushes with him.

Ned gained his feet and sprang to the side of the fainting girl. He had seen her open her eyes, and gently placed her in a sitting attitude when three guerrillas went by.

The trio scarcely gave Ned and the maiden a second glance. The boy drew a deep breath of relief as the three men passed out of sight, and he noticed that they had not gone in the direction taken by King Bittern.

Ned's brain was in a whirl.

The lad felt completely dazed and mystified by the last incident.

"What can it mean? What is the explanation? Surely the man calling himself King Bittern acted the part of a friend toward me, and his voice was that of Old Kemp, my dear scout comrade. He used the ex-trapper's favorite words—'redskins an' rattlesnakes,'" muttered the boy.

Then a thrilling idea flashed through the mind of the youthful scout, and he mentally added:

"It must surely be that Old Kemp was not slain by the bushwhackers, who thought they left his dead body at the bottom of the swamp lay-out. No, no! I know the old trapper scout of the Shenandoah too well to be deceived now. Old Kemp lives, and he is here to help me save the Union prisoners in the character of King Bittern."

Ned was convinced that he had solved the mystery of the friendship of the pretended rebel. The boy's spirits rose at once.

He felt that the cunning old Indian fighter from the Far West was, of all men, the best fitted to outwit and deceive Mosby's mountain cat-throats.

Ned was prompted by the first natural impulse to try to get out of the guerrilla camp without further delay. But he considered upon second thought that he had best not attempt until he had seen the pretended King Bittern again.

Probably the trapper scout might require his assistance for the rescue of the Union prisoners, whom he had respited by a daring ruse.

Ned was assured, too, that Old Kemp would place it out of Neal Jaffers' power to do any further harm, at least for the time.

Mildred had not witnessed the timely assault upon Neal Jaffers by the man in gray. But Ned hastened to acquaint her with the secret of his deliverance.

"Oh, how happy I am! Now you and your disguised friend may yet rescue me as well as the poor Union prisoners," said Mildred, when she had heard all.

"What! Do you mean you are a captive, too, Mildred?" asked Ned, in surprise.

"Yes, yes. Do you not remember I said I had a secret to tell you. A strange, dark mystery to reveal."

"Oh. True. True. And you were about to explain when Neal Jaffers rushed upon me."

"Yes, Ned. And I will tell you all now. First, let me say I am a prisoner, and I was brought here by Neal Jaffers, who is John Mosby's personal friend."

"Have the rebels then found out that you and your father are Unionists. Have they begun to make you the victims of cruel persecution on that account?"

"No. It is not that. Oh, Ned, you will not believe it. For I cannot, despite the proof that Neal Jaffers has shown of the truth of the terrible secret of my life. Can I tell you after all? Can I risk losing your regard?"

Mildred hesitated, and with her hands involuntarily clasped in a gesture of entreaty, looked into his face as if to read his thoughts—as if to see if she could discern therein what influence the revelation she hesitated to make might exert upon him.

"Say on, Mildred. Nothing can change the opinion I have already formed that you are the best and dearest girl in all the world!" replied Ned, ardently.

Mildred blushed charmingly, and she was about to speak further, when a guerrilla came striding hastily up to the young scout and said:

"The colonel has the answer to Beauregard's dispatches ready. You can be off with them at once if you like. He has sent me to say."

"All right; I'll hasten to the colonel's tent," replied Ned, and when the man had turned away he added to Mildred:

"Now tell me the secret. Hesitate no longer, for I must leave the guerrillas' camp now. To attempt to remain now would arouse suspicion."

"Well, then, Neal Jaffers has the proof that my mother was a slave—that I was born in bondage, and that I, too, am a slave according to Southern law," said Mildred.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE REVELATION OF A VERDICT.

Ned was dumfounded by the terrible revelation Mildred Hastings had made. He had not anticipated anything of the kind.

But he could not credit the truth of the statement. He thought at once it was a cruel falsehood invented by the rebel spy for some base purpose.

"It cannot be true. Mildred, what has come over you?" Ned cried instantly.

"My father is dead. He died suddenly at our home, some weeks since, and by my parent's death I am left all alone in the world, for you know I have neither brother nor sister, and I never knew my mother, who died in my infancy."

"Your father was a man of honor, and I am sure that you were not born a slave as that the man is telling you," said Ned.

"You make me very happy by saying that. But I have still more to tell you."

"Yes. Let me hear all, and pardon me if I urge you to hasten with the recital."

"After my father's death it was found he was much in debt, and that Neal Jaffers, who was formerly a cotton broker and slave trader, was one of the largest creditors."

"Yes—yes."

"My father left no will, and when his executors had settled the claims against the estate as far as possible there was nothing left for me, and several thousand dollars yet remained due Neal Jaffers."

"Ah! I suspect what is coming now, Mildred."

"Among my father's papers the executor had found a sealed letter addressed to the lawyer who had for years represented my father's legal business. The contents of the letter were read from me and the result of the executor's investigation had been that Neal Jaffers had been actually taken the money was read to me by Jaffers. It contained the lawyer's solemnly sworn and witnessed by a notary public, that I was the daughter of a slave, and, therefore, a slave myself. This, being confirmed, my father had bought me of a slave dealer, who assured him my parents were notorious and well known to keep the secret, and that I was the only child of a slave. He had then directed the lawyer to draw my father's last will, stating that the document should leave everything to me, if there was any inheritance left when all just claims had been settled."

"Mildred paused and Ned said excitedly:

"This is one of Neal Jaffers' plots. The letter must have been a forgery, of which he is the author."

"The executor did not think so. The sealed letter was a part of my father's estate, and a part of my father's estate, valued at so much money."

"Oh, Mildred, do not talk of yourself in that manner. It is terrible!"

"I must tell you all. My father's executors paid the final debt of Neal Jaffers to him in cash and stock. They gave me to Neal Jaffers as a part of my father's estate, valued at so much money."

"Merciful heaven! And according to Southern law you are now Neal Jaffers' slave!"

"Yes; and he brought me to this retreat of the guerrillas and he has been a fine old fellow to me."

"What is the threat of which you speak?" asked Ned. His voice, trembling with the indignation he felt against the arch scoundrel, whom he believed to have so foully conspired against the orphan girl.

"Neal Jaffers has sworn that if I persist in my refusal to become his wife he will take me to Petersburg and in the slave market sell me to the highest bidder."

"That shall never be! I see it all now. Jaffers has worked out a serious, well-conceived plot to compel you to become his wife. But I know there is not one drop of negro blood in your veins. One has only to look at you to feel assured of that. Mildred, you shall never live the life of a slave. I shall see you my promise that if the good God only spares my life you shall never go to be sold as a slave in the South. You shall be rescued from this stronghold of your foe."

"I will rely upon you, and, come what may, nothing shall make me consent to accept the suit of Neal Jaffers—the villain who has dared call me a slave!"

Mildred looked as lovely as she was beautiful as she spoke. She had on a new, slender, graceful form dress, and her eyes, that dark eyes, shined with the light of noble resolution.

Ned pressed her hand warmly, saying:

"I honor you for your resolution. And now, dear Mildred, I must go. Good-bye. But I hope it may be only a short time before we meet again."

He turned and walked quickly to the tent of the guerrilla chief. There he received the message Mosby wished to send to the chief general in reply to the dispatch the boy scout had brought.

Meanwhile the disguised trapper-scout, Old Kemp, was at work on making one of the most daring rescues of the whole war.

Having carried Neal Jaffers some distance, he bound and gagged the miserable rebel spy, and secreted him in a thick place among the mountain ledges.

After that the old Union scout crept away, made a detour, and presently entered the guerrilla camp again, directly in the rear of the rough shed in which the six Union prisoners were confined.

Old Kemp crept through a hole in the rear wall of the shed, which he had previously noted, and so gained the interior of the room unperceived, without passing a couple of the Confederate soldiers who stood guard at the door.

The six men, still chained two by two, were seated about

on the earthen floor. The only light came through a narrow window over the door.

Old Kemp stole forward and one of the prisoners suddenly saw him.

"Hello! you sneaking grayback. Are you coming to knife one of us on the sly?" demanded the Union prisoner who first caught sight of Old Kemp.

"Hi! you damn varmint! Red head an' rattle-brain, ye ought to git a pair o' back-spectacles. Jack Burton! Don't ye take the name?" said Old Kemp, the center of the party goes a considerable way."

Jack Burton knew the voice and the peculiar method of speech. He uttered one exclamation of the exclamation, and then he was silent, and with all the other inexperienced men, listened curiously while the old Union scout went on to say:

"Now then, boys, I'm a-goin' to set ye free."

Working rapidly and using a bunch of keys, he had secured in the earthen camp, Old Kemp unlocked the chains that bound the men in blue.

When they were all free the scout signaled them to follow him.

He crept through the opening in the rear of the shed, and one after another the six Union men followed him. When the last one had come safely out of the guerrilla prison pen Old Kemp disappeared.

"Boys, I've got six good guns hid in the bushes on the west side o' camp. I got the shootin'-irons from a stack o' the Johnnies' rifles. We'll go for them weapons, an' then we hev' got to git out of this down the steep ledge on the west side o' the camp. The guerrillas reckon no one kin come up that way, an' there's no guard there for us to pass."

The old scout immediately led the men in the direction of the place where he had secreted the rifles for them.

It was at just about that time that Ned Burton was receiving the dispatches for Beauregard from the hands of Mosby, the guerrilla chief.

"Now, then, young man, you will take these dispatches immediately to General Beauregard's headquarters," said the guerrilla chief, as he placed a large sealed envelope in Ned's hands.

"Very well, sir, I'll be off at once," replied Ned. Then placing the dispatch carefully in the inside pocket of his coat, he saluted and turned away.

But the next moment a ringing shout echoed through the camp, and a young man in Union blue, well mounted and attended by two guerrillas came dashing into camp.

At one glance Ned recognized the horse. Bestrode by the new arrival. It was Shooting Star.

"My horse, and ridden by the young Confederate I have personated!" said Ned mentally.

Then he made a desperate rush at the new arrival.

At the same instant he whipped out his revolver and fired twice. The two guerrillas with the Confederate orderly fell.

Ned grasped the young orderly, who was unarmed, and tore him from the saddle. Then he vaulted into his saddle, wheeled Shooting Star like a flash, and sent him at the entrance of the trail by which he had entered the guerrillas' stronghold.

But a score of the mountain band, who had sprang to arms, bounded to cut off Ned's escape.

CHAPTER IX.

OLD KEMP AND THE UNION SCOUTS TAKE A HAND.

The boy cavalry scout threw himself along the side of Shooting Star furthest from the enemy.

Knowing the wonderful leaping power of the gallant old steed-chaser, the boy was determined again to rely upon the noble steed to carry him by the peril that stood in his way.

The twenty rebel guerrillas were evidently intent upon preventing the escape of the Union boy scout.

They had been shouted to by the two escorts of the Confederate orderly, and had they entertained a doubt that Ned was other than what he seemed or not they had received the positive information that the lad was a Union spy.

The young orderly whom Ned had left bound and gagged in the woods down the valley had succeeded in releasing himself, and mounted upon the last horse which he had found nearby, he had hastened on to the guerrilla camp.

To the sentinel on the mountain-side he had made known the truth.

The latter had come with the rebel orderly into the guerrilla camp accompanied by another one of the guerrilla trail guards, and upon entering the camp he had shouted the alarming information:

"The fellow who professed to be a messenger from Beauregard is really a Union boy spy!"

Ned had not heard this, for he was at the time engaged with the guerrilla chief, and too far removed from the entrance of the camp to catch the remarks of the trail guards.

The Union boy rushed his gallant steeple-chaser straight at the enemies who barred his way.

Twenty rifles were leveled at the daring boy.

The guerrillas could have riddled him with bullets, but they did not do so.

The truth was they thought there was no necessity that they should fire upon the boy. They considered it a certainty that they could stop him and take him alive.

The guerrillas had no knowledge that the Union boy was mounted upon the most wonderful leaping horse in all the South, it appeared.

They knew nothing of the remarkable old steeple-chaser which Ned Burton rode.

"Go it, old fellow! We have got to make a leap for life again this time. Up, up! Now forward! Forward for life and liberty!"

As the last words pealed from the lips of the boy cavalry scout he sent Shooting Star at the line of guerrillas.

"Halt! Halt!"

But Ned heeded it not. The next moment Shooting Star bounded into the air.

Like a bird the wonderful leaping horse of the Union boy cavalry scout seemed to soar aloft.

Up! up he went grandly, majestically.

But would he clear the line of mountain cut-throats who were intent upon preventing the escape of the brave rider.

The astonished rebels crouched down instinctively, fearing the contact of the iron shod hoofs of the gallant steed.

"Hurray! Hurrah!" shouted Ned as, after a thrilling flight, Shooting Star alighted safely beyond the lines of the rebels.

Then, while the surprised enemy yet remained victims of astonishment, Ned urged his horse on.

But his escape was not yet assured.

Between two great trees, standing upon opposite sides of the mountain trail, the rebels had rigged a sliding gate which, because it was drawn into the bushes so as to leave the trail open, Ned had failed to see, when he entered the camp.

This rude gate made of oak saplings, spiked to stout cross-pieces, was now drawn. It stood fifteen feet high with sharpened points in a close row. A terrible barrier for a horse, even if like the wonderful steeple-chaser, he could make tremendous aerial flights.

As the boy scout caught sight of this barrier closing the pass, bounded on each side by the lofty rocks he shuddered.

It seemed to Ned that even Shooting Star could not make the leap—could not clear the gate.

But in the desperation of the moment the lad resolved to make the attempt.

With voice and spur he rushed the noble steed straight at the mountain gate.

But the intelligent horse refused to make the jump. With a sagacious instinct the animal seemed to divine that the leap was beyond his power.

He stopped short with a half-human neigh of protest, and Ned thought despairingly as he saw the guerrillas coming on at full speed to capture him.

"After all I am doomed! Where now is my disguised friend?"

The despair of that moment was the most terrible experience of all Ned Burton's eventful life.

But only for a brief space did that dread conviction that his doom was assured fill his perturbed brain.

The ensuing moment a volley of rifle shots rang out behind him.

Wheeling instantly he witnessed a most thrilling and surprising scene.

All at once, out of the cover of the thicket rushed seven men led by Old Kemp. Of course the followers of the disguised Union scout were the six prisoners he had liberated.

They had heard the Confederate orderly shout the alarm,

and, swiftly making a detour, they had poured a volley of rifle bullets into the ranks of the guerrillas just in time.

Charging forward through the ranks of their enemies who fled, appalled at beholding the prisoners fully armed rushing to assault them, the liberated Union scouts reached the rude mountain gate in less time than is required to record the achievement.

Old Kemp led the van, and when he reached the gate he threw himself from his horse and, bounding forward, drew the bolts and hooks that secured it, and quickly slid it aside.

"Forward, boys! Forward on the jump!" yelled the old Union scout.

Like a whirlwind Ned went through the mountain gateway, followed by the escaping Union prisoners, led by Old Kemp.

Down the mountain trail that was the direct course from the camp of the guerrillas, thundered Shooting Star.

On and on behind him raced the escaping Union scouts on foot, while the entire guerrilla camp sprang to arms, and inaugurated a pursuit, well mounted and led by the dreaded Mosby in person.

Down the rugged mountain trail came the gray-coated raiders in a body, numbering more than three hundred men.

Old Kemp glanced back, and the face of the daring veteran of a hundred fierce fights assumed a troubled look.

He knew that the Union lines were miles away, and that the intervening country was infested with foes of the Union cause, who would seek to aid the guerrillas in capturing his party.

But the trapper-scout of General Grant's army meant to make a heroic struggle to reach the Union camp.

To Ned he shouted:

"Never mind us! Oh! On, boy, and let the bluecoats know our situation! Hasten! Redskins an' rattlesnakes! run yer hoss as yer hev never run the critter afore, an' bring some o' Uncle Sam's troopers to the front!"

The next moment the Union scout plunged into the wood beside the trail and disappeared from the sight of Ned and the rebels.

A score of the guerrillas came on after Ned, while the others went in pursuit of Old Kemp's party. The boy scout felt he was engaged in a race for life.

CHAPTER X.

THE READING OF MOSBY'S DISPATCH.

In the midst of the peril and excitement of his flight from the guerrillas' camp, Ned had scarcely time for collected thought, but despite his personal danger, he was mentally intent upon devising some plan looking to the rescue of Mildred.

The probability now was that the guerrillas would change the location of their encampment, and that even in the event of his soon being able to lead a Union force against them, they would elude him.

Mildred, meanwhile, might be hurried away by Neal Jeffers, Ned thought, for he knew that Old Kemp could not have slain the rebel in cold blood, and he considered that the old scout must have left Jeffers near the camp, where in all probability he would ultimately be found by his comrades.

The beautiful face of Mildred was before the mental vision of the boy scout, as he pressed on in his wild race to elude the pursuing guerrillas, and he was resolved to know no rest while she was in the power of the arch villain who had dared to brand her with the debasing name of slave.

Presently Ned neared the cover in which he had left Bruno. A shout brought the faithful dog bounding to his young master, and followed by the animal the lad proceeded on.

The speed attained by Shooting Star enabled him to distance his rebel pursuers, and ere long Ned emerged upon the road leading to Barnard's Mills.

The town of Suffolk, to the northward, was the most northern outpost of General Grant's army, and the young scout headed directly for that town.

As he advanced, keeping a vigilant lookout for the guerrillas, who he thought might encounter him as he proceeded, it occurred to Ned to examine the dispatches he had received from Mosby.

Producing the sealed envelope he eagerly opened it, hoping that he might from its contents learn something of importance regarding Beauregard's movements.

Hastily reading the guerrilla's message, Ned uttered an exclamation of surprise.

Then he went over the dispatch carefully.

It ran as follows:

"In Camp on Broadtop Mountain,
May 10, 1864.

"General Beauregard, C. S. A.—Replying to yours just received, I will send the men of my command to guard the railroad bridge on the Nottaway, between Stony Creek and Janette station, as you direct. Please order the next train conveying Union prisoners to Petersburg to stop at the bridge and take on as passengers a friend of mine and a female slave.

"(Signed)

JOHN MOSBY."

Crushing the dispatch in his hand, as he would have liked to crush its author, Ned exclaimed:

"It must be Neal Jaffers has determined to take Mildred to Petersburg at once. But, Heaven willing, I will be at the railway bridge on the Nottaway as soon as the guerrillas.

The lad was about to throw away the dispatch, when it occurred to him he might possibly have further use for it.

Carefully smothering it out he replaced it in his pocket, but he tore the envelope into bits and threw them into the bushes.

It was fortunate that Ned had retained the dispatch, for he had not ridden half a mile further when a squad of rebel cavalry came down a crossroad and halted where he would have to pass.

The young scout rode boldly up to the Confederates and he was ordered to halt. He obeyed at once, and as he drew rein he shouted:

"I am carrying a dispatch from Colonel Mosby to General Beauregard."

The uniform of the rebel orderly, which he still wore, went far to carry out this assertion. But he was immediately called upon to prove its truth.

"We must see your papers," said the rebel, and then Ned was convinced that his horse was unrecognized.

Producing Mosby's dispatch without a word of protest, Ned handed it to the leader of the cavalry squad, who examined it and seemed fully satisfied that the lad was what he assumed to be.

Apologizing for delaying him, the rebel leader ordered his men aside.

It was fortunate for Ned that the road he was on, though it led north, was the most direct route to a crossroad two miles further on which made a detour along the edge of a swamp and shortened the route to the rebel lines.

But of course Ned did not turn off at the crossroad when he had ridden on.

And the lad was in luck at last, for he came upon a scouting company numbering some four hundred of the First New York cavalry, not three miles from the place where he met the Confederates.

Ned hastened to acquaint the cavalymen with the circumstances which had recently transpired, and the daring Colonel Judson, who was in command of the bluecoats, decided to advance upon the guerrillas.

Riding at full speed, led by the young scout, the troopers in blue made their way into the woods at the foot of Broad Top Mountain, and in a short time they were joined by Old Kemp and the escaped Union prisoners. The escaped men were mounted on extra horses of the troopers.

The latter had engaged in a running fight with the guerrillas among the rocks and thickets, but thanks to Old Kemp's skill in woodcraft, they had finally thrown the enemy off the trail.

The site of the guerrillas' camp was soon reached. But not a man was found there. Mosby's men had deserted the secret stronghold. Taking Mildred with them, Old Kemp said:

"I reckon, from some of their mountain lookouts, the graybacks must hev seen us comin' in too strong a force, and so cut and run fer it."

"At all events we'll destroy the camp, and the supplies the enemy has left behind them," said the cavalry colonel.

The boys in blue hastened to fire the tents and cabins of the guerrillas, and as the band rode away, the structure

which had given shelter to Mosby's mounted robbers were wrapped in flames.

Old Kemp turned aside, and visited the place where he left Neal Jaffers. But the rebel spy was no longer in the thicket. The thongs with which the scout had bound his prisoner lay on the ground, and they had been clean-cut.

"The graybacks found the varmint, and set him free," said Old Kemp, holding up the several cords for the inspection of Ned, who had followed him.

The lad assented and then mutual explanations ensued between him and the veteran scout. The latter said:

"I was taken by the guerrillas an' run to the mountain camp. But I gave the rascals the slip. Made a leap fer life down the ledge on the west side o' the camp an' run fer it. When I was overtaken on the bayou I saw there was only one chance. I took that chance an' dove into the water, just in time to escape the bullets fired at me. Then I swam under the bushes on the bank, and when the varmints had gone, crept out an' joined the boys o' our army on the retreat from Barnard's mill. Then I heard o' the capture o' Jack Barton and his party, an' also that our boys hed caught Brox, the guerrilla, and his men. Redskins an' rattlesnakes. I wa'n't long in gittin' into the togs o' a reb prisoner of ours, an' one of our boys writ the note I gave Mosby, which purported to come from General Grant. I look enough the King Bittern, the reb I pretended to be, to pass for him, though I never was glad of the resemblance until now. You know the rest."

Old Kemp already knew the story of the mysterious murder of Ned's father.

The boy now said:

"I have found my father's assassin at last. The man I have discovered to be the murderer is Neal Jaffers.

Then the young scout went on and related how Bruno—his dead father's dog—had led him to the detection of the assassin, and he further told his eccentric old friend all about Mildred Heath and Jaffers' plan to take her South and sell her as a slave.

Rejoining the cavalry the youth and the veteran of the war continued their conversation, and Ned placed Mosby's dispatch in Old Kemp's hands.

"Redskins and rattlesnakes!" cried the old trail hunter when he had read it. "Yer's work manned out fer us all slick and plain. We'll make a try to foil Neal Jaffers. Durn the varmint. If all goes well we'll snatch the poor Union gal out o' his clutches at the railroad bridge."

"Bravo! I knew you would help me. And, old pard, from this time forth I am resolved to capture Neal Jaffers. I have sworn to bring my father's assassin to justice."

"That's right, boy; that's right! Justice and vengeance! But there will be a great service to the Union cause to be performed at the railway bridge. If ther train filled with our boys, who are the rebs' prisoners, ain't set free right there we ought to be called in for good!" cried Old Kemp.

Colonel Judson, of the cavalry, approved of the daring scheme the boy scout and Old Kemp had formed, and which they now hastened to broach to him.

Orders were given to march for the railway bridge.

Night came on while the Union force were en route, and though they were venturing into the enemies' country, and all felt they were taking a desperate risk, the darkness favored them.

At no great distance from the railway bridge, which the Union troopers meant to make the scene of a grand achievement, Ned saw lights flashing about in the windows of an old stone house at some distance from the highway, in the center of a plantation.

The recollection came to the mind of the lad immediately that, before the war, Neal Jaffers had for a time resided there.

"Old pard," said Ned to the veteran, who rode by his side, "it is now after midnight, and yet some one is astir in the old stone mansion yonder in which Neal Jaffers formerly lived. Let's ride down there and investigate. I scarcely dare hope such a thing, and yet who knows, Jaffers may have stoped there with Mildred on his way to the railroad bridge."

CHAPTER XI.

THE REBEL'S HIDDEN GOLD.

"Lead on, youngster. We hev' got a leetle the best mounts in our party, and we can overtake the rest, before

they reach the railroad, after visiting the old one mansion. But wait just one moment."

An Old Kuap spoke he spurned his horse forward, and joined a trooper's side, who rode a little distance ahead. The latter, at the veteran's request, opened an extra knapsack which he carried and gave the old fellow a package which he took from it.

"Hello! What have you got there?" asked Ned, as Old Kemp rejoined him, and they turned their horses in the direction of the old mansion.

"Only some signal rockets. We may need 'em. I told Dean, the rocket man, to look out for signals from us."

"Good. In case we should need a light at the old house we can call the boys by sending up a rocket."

"Of course."

They rode in silence until they were near the old house. Then, dismounting, they crept their animals in a grove and went forward on foot.

The night was sufficiently gloomy to conceal their approach, and they reached the old mansion without anything that indicated the parties had discovered them.

The lights continued to move about in the darkness, and gaining a window where a light emanated, Old Kemp paused and peered within.

They did not see the man they half hoped to find there, but in the room they did see four rough-looking men in the costume of guerrillas.

The men were devouring hardtack and cold meat at a table, and in a moment the spies without caught the following conversation:

"Wonder what Jaffers was so determined to turn aside here for?" said one of the guerrillas.

"I'll wager it's something important," said another.

"Yes, and don't mean to let us into the secret."

"That's so, for he has gone down into the cellar and looked the door behind him, after feeling any of us to attempt to follow him."

Ned and Old Kemp exchanged silent signals.

Then the former whispered:

"Take a pack of mystery. We must try to find out what Ned Jaffers is about in the cellar."

"Yes," assented Old Kemp, "most of these old Southern houses have an outside cellar door. Let's look and see if we can find one here."

They went silently and swiftly around to the rear of the house.

In a moment or so they discovered an outside door, covering a short flight of stairs. Opening the door without noise, the two Unionists descended. At the bottom of the flight they were confronted by a second door, but, pushing upon it gently, they were agreeably surprised by its yielding.

Peering through the crack of the door they saw a light in the cellar beyond, and Ned's heart began to beat faster as he beheld Ned Jaffers.

In his hand the rebel spy carried a small lantern, and he was pacing slowly along the rear wall of the cellar, counting, thus as he went and touching one of the stones in the wall as he pronounced each numeral.

"One, two, three, four, five, six, seven, here we are, the seventh stone," said Jaffers.

He placed his lantern on the head of a barrel that stood conveniently at hand and, seizing the stage he had passed before, drew it out of its place, an opening behind the wall was then disclosed and from the hidden space Jaffers drew a leather bag.

As he lifted it out of its hiding place a number of clinks of metal striking upon metal came from the bag, and Ned's eyes began to scintillate with excitement and anticipation, as he fancied he had heard the clink of gold.

"Ha, ha! All this Yankee gold shall enrich me. I need no longer fear to use it. The Yankees cannot reach me in Peterburg, and if Mosby keeps his compact with me, Ned Burton will not live to call me to account if the war should end the wrong way," muttered Jaffers.

The boy cavalry scout then knew that the rebel assassin had come to the house to secure his hidden treasure, and in a voice scarcely above a breath, the lad whispered to Old Kemp:

"I think the gold in the leather bag ought to be the money which Ned Jaffers stole from my poor, murdered father."

"Yes, and we must get hold of it," replied Old Kemp, in the same low tone that Ned had used.

A further exchange of hurried whispers took place be-

tween them. They determined to try to capture the rebel without alarming his comrades upstairs.

Jaffers placed the bag upon the barrel-head beside his lantern, and set about replacing the stone he had taken from the wall.

Ned and Old Kemp picked forward.

The rebel's back was turned toward them, and they had almost reached him, undetected, when the lantern globe snapped. The light had been turned too high. Jaffers turned at the sound of the breaking glass.

At that instant Ned's hand was outstretched to seize the bag of gold. As the boy clutched the treasure Jaffers beheld the two Old Kuaps.

A violent outburst of terror and surprise burst from the rebel's throat, and he made a leap for the stairs leading up to the second floor of the house. The flight ascended from the rear wall, and which he scaled. Like a flash Jaffers darted up the stairs, and as he ran he discharged his revolver.

The bullet whistled by Ned's head, but the boy was unharmed. Old Kemp returned Jaffers' fire, but just as the veteran of the Union sent a pellet the villain burst open the door at the head of the stairs and disappeared through it into the room above.

"Quick, Ned! We have got to get out of this!" cried Kemp, rushing for the door through which he and the boy had come.

With the bag of gold in his hand, Ned bounded after the veteran. They were at the foot of the outside flight when both paused, as if in obedience to the same impulse.

The clatter of sabers—the sounds of a body of horsemen in the yard reached them. A voice at the head of the stairs called out:

"Spread out, boys, and surround the place until we see what is in it. Like enough some of the Yankees are inside. If so, they can't escape John Mosby."

Ned recognized the voice of the dreaded guerrilla chief.

"Hello, boys, you have come just in time. There was a couple of Yankees in the cellar," the next instant Jaffers was heard to shout, as he opened an outside door.

"What, you here, Jaffers?" replied Mosby.

"Yes, as you see, and four of your men are with me. We turned aside from the main band, who went on with the old house, and came up with the rear guard. The two boys must have been in the loft in the window and come to our light. They are the Yankees who outwitted you at the mountain camp."

"We'll have them out and hang them to the nearest tree, or burn the house over their heads," greeted Mosby.

"Upstairs, by the inside flight, with you!" said Old Kemp, as a number of the enemy were heard descending the outer stairs.

Ned, followed by the veteran, rushed up the inside flight and into the room beyond. The apartment was deserted. Old Kemp was at Ned's heels.

"Let's go to the top of the house! It's death to attempt to leave it now," uttered the former.

They gained the second story, and, forcing open a window, while he kept the guerrillas below stairs, Old Kemp opened the package containing the signal rockets.

"We got to call the boys! It's our only chance now a light for once, too," said the old man.

A moment later he set off the rocket, and a globe of red fire went hurtling through the window in a skyward flight.

The door of the apartment Ned had closed and secured. But Old Kemp opened it as soon as he had set off the rocket.

"Now to the attic. We must gain every moment as possible," said he.

darting up another flight of stairs, the hunted Unionists gained the attic. Ned clung to the bag of gold.

The door through which the pair had come was a stout one, and they closed and barricaded it.

Meantime the guerrillas were searching for them.

The house was being ransacked. The enemy had not failed to see the rocket, and they meant to slay the two hated Yankees and be off before help could reach the devoted pair in response to the signal.

Now the guerrillas, with Jaffers and Mosby at their head, were searching at the attic door.

But the door was so well secured that they were unable to force it. At last, however, it was dashed inward, driven from its hinges, and the guerrillas surged into the attic. There were yells, fierce imprecations, and the rapid discharge of firearms. The air was filled with powder smoke. The two Unionists were making a gallant fight. The guerrilla had brought a

land in with them, but suddenly a bullet from Old Kemp's revolver extinguished it, and then darkness enveloped the smoldering scene.

CHAPTER XII.

THE BATTLE AT THE RAILROAD BRIDGE.

As soon as possible the guerrillas relighted the lantern. As its light flashed up and again illumined the attic, cries of rage and disappointment echoed the lips of Ned Jaffers and Mosby.

The two hunted Unionists had disappeared.

They were no longer in the attic.

"I lost! The gold for which I sold my soul is lost!" cried Neal Jaffers, forgetful of the fact that there were others present.

"What are you talking about? There's no use crying about this. We are captured, again. Come, to horse, all!" said Mosby.

He looked at Jaffers earnestly, and it was evident that he did not know the secret of the treasure which the rebel had lost.

"I hardly know what I was saying. I felt dazed. Come, I can with you to pursue the Yankees," Jaffers forced himself to say.

The guerrillas hastily quitted the old mansion.

Mosby and his horsemen, the scout off the road, planted in a bush in the corner, leaving a camp fire for the Union cavalry, but they did not dare move for a close search, because they knew that Ned and his companions must have friends near or they would not have sent up the rocket.

The escape of the boy scout and his comrades had certainly been a most remarkable one. The boy and Old Kemp had burst out of the attic the instant the latter shot out the light.

Fortune had favored them.

Just then the door was not guarded.

One out of the attic the boy and his companions found no one to bar their way of escape from the house, and they ran for their lives at full speed.

They found the animals where they had left them.

Although Mosby and his bodyguard had ridden by the route in which the Union horses were they had not discovered the animals.

Before the enemy left the mansion Ned and the veteran were standing away.

They had not gone far when they met a strong force coming to their assistance in response to the rocket signal.

It was not deemed expedient to pursue the party under Mosby then, and returning swiftly, on the route they had just traversed, the Union party rejoined the main division of the mounted men.

The battle of South Mountain Court-House had taken place some days before the date we are now writing about.

During that battle a large number of Union soldiers were captured by the enemy. It was rumored, by the boy scout and his comrades, that the train Mosby wished to stop at the bridge would contain these unfortunate Union men, en route to the rebel prison house.

But the question was whether or not Mosby would now guard the bridge, and try to place Mildred Hastings and Jaffers on the train, since he knew the dispatch revealed such was his purpose, had fallen into Union hands.

This view of the matter had, of course, presented itself to Ned and his comrades at the outset. But they decided Mosby would not let the loss of the dispatch change his plan, because he would not for a moment dream the Yankees would venture so deep into the country held by the rebels as the railroad bridge.

Ned and Old Kemp agreed to say nothing about the gold they had found. It was United States money, and the property of the Federal Government. They meant to return it in due time to the proper authorities.

The boy's content was divided. Ned concealed one-half its contents in a knapsack he carried, and Old Kemp secreted the other share on his person.

While they thus disposed of the gold, for the moment, they fell behind the main band of cavalry.

Old Kemp knew the country, and the Union men had further made use of a reliable guide, by calling the services of an old dinky they had found in a lone cabin.

The colored man was only too glad to have a chance to guide "Marse Lincoln's men," as he called the boys in blue.

At last, while the night remained ordinarily gloomy the raiders struck the railway.

The point at which they reached the railroad was, perhaps, half a mile west of the bridge over the Nottaway.

In the woods the cavalry halted, and Old Kemp, only accompanied by Ned, rode a scout to and the bridge. Soon they returned and reported the guerrillas with Neal Jaffers and Mildred Hastings were at the bridge.

By a short route Jaffers and Mosby's bodyguard had gained the bridge ahead of the Union scouts, and found the main guerrilla band already there.

The rebel train from Beauregard's headquarters would come from the west. It was decided the Union men should leave their horses in the care of a few guards and creep up near the bridge.

Knowing Beauregard could not have received his dispatch, Mosby would stop the train by a signal, it was thought. But a red lantern was prepared, and a man was chosen to use it in signaling the train to halt, if Mosby should fail to do so.

The man who was instructed with the signal lantern was an old railroader from the North, well versed in all the signals of railroad men.

Still, the Union men went nearer and nearer the bridge. At last they halted in the darkness at a short distance from it, deploying on both sides of the track.

Then ensued a breathless space of suspenseful anxiety.

But still the murmur of wheels rolled in the distance; and the hum of an approaching train was soon heard.

Suddenly the headlights of a locomotive flashed in the darkness, and it came on and on, like a great blaring beacon through the night.

As the train drew nearer and nearer every eye was watching for a signal from the guerrillas. Finally it was discovered. A red lantern was swung in the darkness by one of the guerrillas near the bridge.

On came the train. The shriek of the locomotive sounded "down brakes!" a moment subsequently, and the train began to slow up.

It was seen that the train was made up of five box-freight cars and a caboose. Armed rebels were seated along on the tops of the cars, and there was no doubt in the minds of the Union men that these cars were packed with their comrades.

It had been some time among the Union force that the moment the train stopped, the attack should be made simultaneously upon the guard of the train and the guerrillas.

As the wheels of the engine ceased to revolve, Ned saw Neal Jaffers spring up the steps of the caboose, which was next the engine, with Mildred in his arms.

As the rebel spy disappeared in the caboose with the captive girl the Union men opened fire.

Simultaneously they discharged two volleys, one at the guard of the train, and the other at the guerrillas, and with a cheer the boys in blue charged the latter.

"Downed with the train, engineer! The Yanks are upon us!" shouted Mosby, and while the Union men rushed for the engine its wheels began to move.

The train was starting.

It seemed that the Union men were to fail to save their comrades in the cars, whose doors were secured on the outside, and that Mildred was doomed to reach the slave market in Petersburg.

It was an awful moment for Ned. He had confessed to himself that Mildred was dearer to him than all the world. He resolved to save her or perish.

Ned and Old Kemp led the charge for the engine.

"Go fer the gal an' the pizen varmint who is carryin' her off! I'll stop the engine?" cried Old Kemp.

He bounded into the cab of the engine with a leveled revolver in his hand, and Ned leaped upon the platform of the caboose.

The speed of the now moving train was rapidly increasing.

Ned dashed open the door of the caboose and sprang inside.

As he did so Neal Jaffers, who was crouching just inside the door, leaped upon him.

Ned's revolver exploded, but the bullet went wide and Jaffers was unharmed.

Then, while the train went on and on, faster and faster toward the dreaded rebel prison to which it was bound, a deadly combat ensued between the Union boy and his father's assassin.

It was Ned's last hope, and he thought that Old Kemp had failed him. Indeed, he knew it must be so.

The engineer had not been compelled to stop the train.

The thunder of the rapidly revolving wheels sounded like a knell of doom in the ears of the despairing boy.

He heard the rattling of the wheels going away in the distance, and he knew that he was swiftly being carried beyond the reach of his friends.

CHAPTER XIII.

THRILLING WORK ON THE RAIL.

The train in which the boy cavalry scout and Ned Jaffers were bound had arrived at the open door of the caboose.

Suddenly they lurched through it, and upon the platform Ned's foot slipped. Jaffers gave him a push, and he pitched headlong from the now flying train.

A cry of horror went up from a female form, crouching in a corner of the caboose. This utterance of mental agony was the voice of Mildred Hastings.

The Union girl, vain and helpless to assist Ned because her hands were bound, believed the heroic lad had been hurled to his doom.

Neal Jaffers bounded back into the caboose and closed the door, and then, with a low cry, as he heard Mildred's expression of the intense alarm and solicitude which she was experiencing.

"He'll trouble me no longer. The Yankee must have gone down the steep embankment a hundred feet. I'll wager he has cracked his skull on the jagged rocks," grunted Jaffers.

"Assassin! Murderer! Surely heaven will yet visit a just punishment upon you!" cried Mildred in tones of abhorrence.

"Ho, ho, ho! I concern myself only to see that the Yankees do not punish me. By heavens! It was a daring attempt of theirs to capture the train. But it failed, and we shall take the Yankees and our safe to the Southern prisons."

"Judgment will surely overtake you yet. The South will repent this unheroic war in sackcloth and ashes, while the land sacred has wrought desolation and death everywhere," said Mildred, in prophetic tones.

"We shall triumph. And now I've a word to say about you, Ned. Until this night I never really intended to sell you as a slave. All that was a threat to make you consent to be my wife. But now, since I have met with a loss that leaves me penniless, I shall sell you. I want five hundred."

Mildred had, to a certain extent, schooled herself to contemplate the fate that threatened her with serene indifference.

She exhibited no marked emotion now, and did not reply to the words of her enemy.

The rebel conspirator seated himself near the girl, and seemed to fall into a reverie, from which he was aroused only by the opening of the car door.

A man in the garb of a rebel captain entered.

"Ah, you headed the train at the battle, you were with Ned's men," said the confederate, addressing Jaffers.

"Yes, and here are my credentials. By the way, captain, how far is the train escort in the distance?"

Jaffers placed a letter from Ned in the hands of the officer as he spoke. The latter replied, as he read the message.

"Half the train cars were dropped by the first volley fired by the Yankees. However, as the box cars are all well secured the chances are we have enough men left to guard the train through to Petersburg all right."

"I am at your service if you need me."

"Thanks; your papers prove you are a valuable man to the Confederacy. I am glad you are with us," replied the captain.

He took a seat with Jaffers, and while we leave the two men discussing the war's situation and Mildred bowed down with grief and despair, we will relate what befell Old Kemp, and explain how he failed to stop the train.

As the old scout leaped into the cab of the locomotive he leveled his revolver at the head of the rebel engineer, who stood with his hand on the lever and his back to Old Kemp.

"Stop this engine, Johnnie!" ordered the old scout. "Reverse that lever or there'll be a dead reb in your boots."

The words had barely escaped the lips of the old scout, when he received a blow on the back of the head from behind that stretched him out at the feet of the engineer, senseless.

The old fireman was back in the tender behind the coal when Old Kemp lay upon the engine.

How low his comrade's pall as the Union scout covered him with the revolver.

Calculating that the Union men had not seen him, the engineer picked up the heavy iron rake he used for clearing the furnace fire and dealt Old Kemp a blow on the head.

So the train sped on.

"Drag the Yank back into the tender. If you ain't sure you have broken his skull, hit him again!" cried the rebel engineer.

The firemen uttered a threatening oath, and laying hold of Old Kemp by the feet, dragged him roughly back among the coal and cinders in the tender.

The Union scout was lying motionless.

"I guess he's done for," said the fireman.

He joined the engineer in the cab then, and the speed of the train was increased.

Throwing the throttle wide open, the engineer said to his companion:

"The Yanks ain't take the train while Dan Kemp is at the throttle. It was a close call, but a close call is a mile any time."

Half an hour later the fireman went back to the tender to shovel coal into the engine fire.

Then he was surprised and the engineer found him shout:

"By thunder, Dan, he's gone!"

"What! you don't know the old Yank?"

"Yes, I do. The old fellow I think I'd kill for the coal ain't in the tender."

"He must have come to and jumped off. It's a pity you didn't make sure of him."

"That's so. But he'll never get back to the Yankee lines. He's too far in the rebel country."

While the engineer and fireman were discussing the chances for Old Kemp's escape with the rebellion, the Yankees were at every word they said, and chuckled to him.

When he came to his senses and found himself in the tender of the locomotive, the train had come too far to make it any longer advisable for him to attempt to stop it.

The Union cavalry and the rebel forces were at the rear of the train had been made was now miles in the rear.

Slowly the old scout crept back out of the tender, and seized the front platform of the caboose. Looking through the little window in the door of the caboose saw Jaffers, and the rebel captain in it.

Old Kemp crawled down, and reflected for a moment as to what he had best do. To his mind the only way to save himself, and the Federal soldiers that up the cattle in the hands of the train, was the all important object, now, as heretofore.

He believed Ned had been left behind. Indeed, the old scout feared the brave lad might have met his death at the hands of Jaffers.

From that moment the train was driven further and further into the rebel territory, out of which it would be more difficult to escape the more deeply it was penetrated.

Indeed, Old Kemp, who had been on the top of the locomotive, resolved upon a desperate attempt, looking to the rescue of the Union prisoners yet.

He climbed over the roof of the engine and reached the top of the tall smoke-stack. The men now had an uncertain look, and as he still wore the uniform of the Confederates, which he had possessed since the battle, he was taken for one of the train guards by a rebel he found on the main brake.

The voices of the Union prisoners could be heard from inside the box car, and more than one voice shouted:

"Water! Fresh water! Give us water and let some air in to us, or we shall perish!"

It was a warm night, and the sufferers of the Union men, packed tightly in the close box car, may be imagined.

"Shut up, down there! You'll git water and air when we reach the Confederate city," called out the rebel guard, heartlessly.

Old Kemp heard him, took a bunch of keys as he moved his position, and uttered:

"The engine can give the keys to the car when he lets me. But I don't take no risks for nothing a day. The Yanks might catch on me. If they die in the cars will have to find a way to find a way."

Old Kemp's plan was simple.

He had made a discovery that pleased him immensely.

Creeping cat-like upon the rebel guard, he suddenly dealt

the rascal a blow on the skull with his clubbed revolver that stretched him senseless.

In another moment the Union scout had possessed himself of the keys to the box-cars, and he swung the insensible rebel off the train.

Creeping to the edge of the roof, he hung down by one hand, and employed the other to unlock the door of the car.

As he did so he said to the men inside:

"Old Kemp, the Union scout, is about to open the door. Keep still, but be ready to jump when the way is clear."

The next moment the door of the car opened.

"Now, boys, for life and liberty!" said the scout.

The men in blue made a rush and began to leap from the cars.

But at that moment the train shot around a sharp curve into a blaze of light. The rebels on the other cars began to shout and discharge shots at the escaping prisoners. Then there came a volley from the ground.

Old Kemp saw the train had entered a rebel camp.

CHAPTER XIV.

IN PETERSBURG IN DISGUISE.

Dawn was almost at hand, and numerous rebel camp-fires were blazing on each side of the railroad.

Nothing could have been more unfortunate for the Union prisoners Kemp had set free.

Not one of them escaped. Those who were not shot down were driven back into the car from which they had leaped, for the train had been promptly halted as soon as it was seen that the prisoners were leaving it.

Old Kemp was bitterly disappointed.

He comprehended that his own peril was intense.

Acting quickly, he concealed himself upon the trucks under the rear car of the train.

As Old Kemp crawled to the place on the train so frequently occupied by tramps attempting to steal a ride, what was his surprise and alarm to find some one already snugly concealed there.

The succeeding instant the old scout's surprise became complete astonishment, for he recognized the occupant of the space between the trucks under the car.

That personage was Ned Burton, the boy cavalry scout.

"Well! Redskins an' rattlesnakes! Is it you, boy, or your ghost?" gasped Old Kemp, in a whisper.

"It is I, and I am a very lively ghost. I think, old friend, Providence must have a special mission for us to perform, for it seems we are destined to accompany Jaffers and Mildred into the heart of the Confederacy," said Ned.

"That's so, maybe. It's mighty queer how things have worked, but heaven bless ye, boy, I'm tickled 'een most ter to find you all safe an' sound."

"I can say the same of you. But why didn't you make the engine stop the train?"

Old Kemp hastily explained, and told how he had opened the door of the box car. In conclusion he inquired:

"Now, how came you here?"

"Almost by a miracle. I was hurled from the train by Jaffers and, as good luck would have it, I did not go down the steep bank. The train had not got under full headway, and I managed to catch the rear car and jump on the bumper. I tell you it was sharp work, and I came very near going under the wheels."

"Well, boy, what do you propose now? If we are in luck we may be carried all the way to Petersburg, without being discovered."

"That's so, and that's what I hope for. You know if we were to leave the train, the chances would be against our getting back to the Union lines alive."

"Yes."

"Besides, I want to go to Petersburg. I am yet resolved to make one final effort there to save Mildred from a fate worse than death. She shall not be sold into slavery if my life even can save her. That pledge I now reiterate."

"You hev got the right sort o' pluck. Redskins an' rattlesnakes, ha. Old Kemp will stick to you as long as he has got a button on his tog. I'll tell you what it seems to me our game should now be."

"Good. Let me have your advice."

"Well, we'll try to reach Petersburg undetected on this rebel prison-train. If we do get to the rebel city all right

we will find a friend there, ready and willing to help us to disguise. Then, as new characters, I reckon we'll make one more desperate try to snatch the Union gal outen the clutches of her enemies."

"Good. That is the very project I had resolved upon. But tell me, who is the friend you expect to find in Petersburg?"

"A Union man—a cousin o' mine, who hasn't shown his true colors fer fear o' losin' his property—like Mildred's father. His name is Ben Dartmore, and if he only had a leetle more true courage he'd be a fust-rate feller."

"Well, this is lucky. You never mentioned to me before that you had a rebel friend in Petersburg."

"Well, this is lucky. You never mentioned to me before that you had a rebel friend in Petersburg."

"That's so. I don't air all I know, even to friends, unless there is some call to do so."

"A good idea. But I tell you, pard, I can hardly keep still here and see those rascally rebs driving our poor boys back into the prison car."

"I'm itchin' ter drop the sight on some o' the varmints myself. But this here are a case where a feller hez got to keep still or go under."

Old Kemp had taken his place beside Ned, and when the prisoners who were not slain had been driven into the car and secured the train again started.

Ned and the old scout breathed easier when the train was presently beyond the rebel encampment, and they had not been discovered.

The run to Petersburg was a perilous one for the two Unionists riding between the wheels. Not only was it a most dangerous experience, but also a very unpleasant one.

The dust and cinders were showered upon the devoted pair. At times they were almost strangled, and more than once they narrowly escaped being jostled from their places.

But the terrible journey ended at last.

The train entered the depot in Petersburg, and Ned and his loyal comrade, in their rebel uniforms, crept away unquestioned.

They watched the entrance of the station.

Ere long they saw Jaffers come forth leading Mildred Hastings. The poor girl was the picture of despair, and Ned's heart yearned in sympathy for her sorrow.

Old Kemp and the young cavalry scout stealthily trailed the rebel and his fair prisoner when they left the depot.

The two Unionists saw Neal Jaffers conduct Mildred into a gloomy-looking old mansion upon a retired street.

Presently the rebel came out alone. The old mansion was surrounded by a high wall, and a villainous looking white man opened the gate to admit Jaffers and his prisoner, and also let the scoundrel out.

Satisfied that they had located the prison place of Mildred, the old scout and his boy companion hastened away.

Old Kemp acted as guide.

He knew something of the city, having visited it before the war, and spent some time with his cousin.

In a short time the Union pair reached the residence of Old Kemp's cousin, Ben Dartmore, the secret Unionist.

Dartmore was at home.

At first, when a colored servant ushered Old Kemp and Ned into his presence, the cousin of the Union scout failed to recognize his relation.

But when the colored man had gone, and the new arrivals were alone with Dartmore, Old Kemp hastened to reveal himself, and introduced Ned in his true character.

"Merciful heavens!" exclaimed the secret Unionist, springing to the door and locking it, while he began to tremble. "I am sorry you came here. You will be the cause of my being hung for a traitor if you are found out."

"Don't get skeered outin' yer boots, Ben. Durn if I ain't almost ashamed to acknowledge ye for a cousin. You rest easy. No matter what may happen to us, we shall bring no trouble on you," said Old Kemp.

"But you must help us," Ned hastened to add.

"I would like to do so, but I dassent."

"You have got to! I know that you are Union to the backbone, but an infernal coward. You could get us some new clothes, citizen's dresses, such as I shall describe, and some traps for disguising our faces," continued Old Kemp.

"Yes, I might do that. I will do it if you will promise to go then, and no teome near me again."

"All right. Now I'll tell you exactly what we want," replied the old scout.

Hastily then he enumerated the articles of clothing and other things which he required.

Leaving the two Unionists in an upper room of the house which he conducted them immediately, Dartmore went to procure the clothing and other things Old Kemp had named.

In less than an hour he returned, laden with everything the Unionists required, and very soon after that the boy cavalry scout and his old friend were transformed.

Old Kemp was artistically made up as an old Southern planter. Ned was also dressed in planter costume, similar to that worn by Kemp. Both carried small tourists' hand-bags.

Facially they were completely metamorphosed by means of coloring matter, and in Ned's case by the addition of a false mustache and goatee, which made him look ten years older.

Then they set out for the slave market. Shortly after they entered it they saw that Mildred was being auctioned off and the Cuban was bidding her in. Ned entered the bidding with great enthusiasm, and bid so high that the Cuban could not touch him, and Mildred was turned over to Ned. Meantime Jaffers had recognized Ned in spite of his disguise. He reported his suspicions to the general headquarters. But meanwhile Ned and Mildred had left the slave market. Old Kemp remained behind.

Ned and the girl went to the house of a friend in the suburbs. An old negro had seen them enter. Jaffers had secured men from the general, and, meeting the negro, learned where Ned and the girl were. They went to the house, where Jaffers demanded that they "open in the name of the king."

And then Old Kemp, who was waiting about the outskirts of the slave market, was set upon and grabbed by the throat.

CHAPTER XV.

THE UNION SCOUT RECOVERS THE TREASURE.

By the faint light of a single oil-lamp that burned dimly in the old slave market, Old Kemp saw that his assailant was a giant negro.

Instantly the scout remembered what he had heard the watchman say about the one slave that remained in the market.

Then the Unionist knew he was in the clutches of the negro, for whom no purchaser could be found, because of his reputation as a desperate character.

But it had been the experience of the scout that the slaves everywhere and in every instance were the friends of the Union soldiers.

Struggling desperately with the black giant who had pounced upon him, Old Kemp hastened to say:

"Hold, I am a friend. Hold, I say."

But the giant black only uttered a fierce exclamation.

Deceived by Old Kemp's disguise, and having recognized him as the seeming planter, who was present at the slave sale, the negro evidently desperately intent upon making his escape, clearly meant to kill the man whom he believed stood between him and freedom.

"I am a Union man in disguise," continued Old Kemp.

Just then his wig and beard came off.

It had become loosened in the struggle between him and the giant black.

The negro saw that the man he had assailed was not what he seemed. He hesitated in the moment. Old Kemp took advantage of his chance.

He suddenly sprang forward, and from the fold of the slave's

cloak, drew a revolver, and held it to the

negro's head. "Don't shoot!" cried the slave.

"I can't shoot if you stand your ground. Now, then, give your wife to me, if you got any. Didn't yer see me knock the two rebels on the head? Of course you did. Durn yer skin, would I do that if I was one o' their sort? Not never! I'm one of Abe Lincoln's men, nig, an' I'm a givin' myself away to you because I know the darkies all over the South are true to the Union."

Old Kemp spoke so earnestly, and the circumstances were so completely convincing, that the poor negro was convinced.

"Heaven bless you, white man, I'll glad to hear dat you am one of our Lincoln's men. I'll know you will help a poor slave. I'll hand to you away up North. The hand

to jine Massa Linkum's sogers or die. I done thought you meant to stop me, an' I was a-goin' ter kill yer."

"That's all right. I'd a-done the same in your place. Now, what's your name?"

"Dan Jefferson."

"All right, Dan; you jist harness yourself to one o' the guards' guns and revolvers and stand watch while I git to work to blow open the reb's safe."

"I praise heaven. Is you gwine ter 'splode gunpowder yere?"

"Yes."

"Dat won't do. De noise will bring the guard yere on the double quick, sah. Dar's plenty ob dem rebel sogers on duty in de street at night."

"But I'm bound to open that safe. I'll fix it so the explosion won't be loud. But on second thought you an' I will first get into the togs of the two rebels."

While the officer went on to explain his plans further he and the darky exchanged their garments for the Confederate uniform worn by the two watchmen of the slave-market.

They then concealed the insensible men in a little side room.

"I'se a-gwine to stick to yer, Massa Linkum man," then said the poor slave. "I'se lookin' to you to lead me to freedom, like de wise men ob de East, what de good book tells ob, looked to de Star of Bethlehem to lead dem," said the slave earnestly.

"I mean to take you with me back to the Union lines, Dan. Yes, I'm a-goin' to do that. Rattlesnakes an' redskins. But now to work," replied Old Kemp.

While the slave stood guard at the door with the rebel musket at his shoulder, the Union scout went to the safe.

It was an old-fashioned one. Old Kemp produced a torpedo from a case he carried, and set it under the door. A moment later he fixed a train of powder and sent a serpent of fire flashing to the torpedo.

There was a dull, rumbling explosion. The door of the safe flew open.

Old Kemp sprang forward, and in the safe he found ten thousand dollars in Union gold.

He emptied the precious contents of the safe into the knapsack he had taken from the guard, and which he now strapped on his back.

He and Dan were about to go when they heard a rap on the door.

"Hide, Dan, and leave the rest to me," he said, pointing to the door of the little side room, in which the two Confederates he had bound and gagged were concealed.

Dan took the hint instantly, and glided through the interior door.

Then the scout, with his gun at his shoulder, opened the door, saying gruffly:

"What's the row?"

A couple of rebel soldiers were at the door. In the semi-gloom they could not see the face of the scout distinctly. They were deceived by the uniform he had appropriated.

One of them said:

"We heard a report like an explosion from in here."

"Oh, no. I reckon you heard what I heard. It sounded like a blast, and the report seemed to come from the other side of the market," promptly replied the scout.

"That's queer. I could have sworn the sound came from in here. Waal, Dick, let's look around back of the market. Maybe there is something wrong."

Thus replying, the spokesman of the rebels withdrew with his companions.

A moment later, carrying the Union gold he had so bravely recovered, the scout and the colored man were gliding away.

They walked swiftly, carrying their guns in soldierly fashion, and Old Kemp directed his course in the direction of the deserted house which had been agreed upon as the trying place where he was to meet the boy cavalry scout and Mildred.

Though he was entirely ignorant of the fact that Ned had fallen under suspicion, and that a general alarm had been sent out for the boy cavalry scout of the Union, Old Kemp proceeded with great caution, for he was afraid of being tracked.

Once or twice the scout and his comrade were met by rebel soldiers, but they were not questioned.

Evidently they were taken for members of the patrol looking for the boy scout of the Union.

At length Old Kemp and Dan reached the neighborhood of

the old house in which we left Ned and Mildred in deadly peril.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE HUNTED LOVERS AND THEIR FOES.

When Neal Jaffers' thrilling demand, "Open in the name of the Confederacy!" reached the hearing of the boy cavalry scout and Mildred, as their arch enemy battered upon the barred door of the deserted house, in which the hunted Union couple had found refuge, the consternation of the latter may be imagined.

"Merciful heavens!" cried Mildred, in a voice scarcely above a whisper, "our foe has found us out!"

"It seems so. Oh, cruel fate! Would that Old Kemp was here," replied Ned.

As he spoke he drew a revolver in each hand, and Mildred saw his lips take a firm line, while his eyes flashed.

"What do you mean to do?" cried the trembling girl.

"I mean to save you or die with you," came the determined answer of the boy hero.

The succeeding moment the rebels without made a furious attack on the door that stood between them and the human prey they were hunting.

"Ned," said Mildred, "let us seek a hiding-place in the house. Is there no place of concealment in which we may possibly elude the search of the enemy?"

"I know of none."

The door seemed about to fall.

Obedying an impulse, Mildred glided through an interior door.

Ned closed it behind her, and standing with his back against it, leveled his revolvers at the outer portal.

The assaulted door went down with a crash the next moment.

The rebels crowded into the house.

Neal Jaffers was in the lead.

At the sight of Ned he exclaimed:

"Ha! caught at last! We'll soon see under your disguise, my pretender, and if we don't unmask a Yankee spy you may shoot me."

The Union boy was desperate, and he would have immediately inaugurated a fight that could scarcely have ended otherwise than fatally to himself. But as he was about to open fire a thrilling scream uttered by Mildred reached him.

Wheeling like a flash, and thinking only that the girl he loved was in peril, Ned tore open the door at his back.

At the same instant a half dozen men leaped upon him, and he was borne to the floor.

Jaffers rushed into the interior room. But he found it empty. He had recognized Mildred's voice, however, and he was sure she was in the house.

Calling two of his men he started to explore the premises, in search of the maiden.

Meanwhile, Ned's disguise was removed by the rebels who had overpowered him, and he was bound hand and foot.

The rebel spy came back after a vain search for Mildred, swearing viciously. He paused as he saw and recognized Ned's undisguised face.

"So our suspicions were correct! At last, Ned Burton, you are in my power!" cried Jaffers, as he glanced at the Union boy.

Ned did not reply. He believed that the thrilling drama of his life was nearly played to the end, but he would not allow his foe to see his despair.

"Now, then, you infernal Yank, tell me what has become of the girl? The house is surrounded. She could not have left it unseen by my men. There must be some secret hiding-place in which she is concealed," said Jaffers.

"I know of none," replied the Union boy.

"You lie! You mean the girl shall escape me. But she shall not! There is a secret of this house, I say, and you know it! By heaven, you shall be compelled to divulge the truth," hissed Jaffers.

"I tell you, Neal Jaffers, I am as ignorant as you are regarding what you wish to know. You are assuming too much. Suppose I tell you Mildred Hastings was not here. You have heard of ventriloquism. Well, suppose you have been duped by an exhibition of my ventriloquial power," said Ned.

"That won't do. You can't make me swallow any such

non sense! Boys, put a noose around his neck. We'll hang him or he shall tell the secret of the old house," said Jaffers.

A rope was produced and a hangman's noose was placed about Ned's neck.

Neal Jaffers was about to give the order to swing the brave Union boy up, for the rope had been thrown over a raft in the unplastered room, when the door of the room into which Mildred had retreated and from which she had mysteriously vanished was dashed open.

Mildred herself sprang forth.

Rushing to Ned's side she threw the noose from his neck before the rebels could stay her hands.

"Ho, ho! So I brought you from your hiding-place, my beauty?" cried Jaffers, in tones of triumph.

As he spoke Ned made a forward leap and snatched a revolver from the belt of one of the rebels. Then, whirling Mildred into a corner, he leveled the weapon he had secured at his foe, while he stood before the girl protectingly.

"Stand back!" thundered the heroic Union lad. "I mean to fight to the very death now, and I hold more than one of your lives at my mercy while I have this weapon."

As Ned spoke there sounded a volley of shots from outside the house. The next instant a throng of black-faced men surged into the room.

"Kill the niggers!" cried Jaffers.

Pistols cracked; there were shouts and yells; the air became heavy with powder smoke.

Mildred sank half fainting upon the floor, well nigh overcome with terror.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE LEAGUE OF THE BLACK MEN.

As Old Kemp and the loyal darky who was seeking to escape to the Union lines approached the deserted house a singular circumstances transpired.

All at once a shrill call like that of a nightbird rang out.

The sound emanated from a clump of trees at the roadside.

The suburban locality was but thinly settled, and clumps of trees abounded.

Old Kemp heeded not the cry, which he attributed to a bird.

But Dan paused the instant the peculiar sound reached his hearing.

The darky gave a violent start as he came to an abrupt standstill.

Looking at his face under the moonlight, the veteran scout saw it was transformed by a new expression.

Hope and joy was depicted upon the countenance of the loyal black man.

Observing this, Old Kemp began to suspect that the call that was such an excellent imitation of a nightbird's cry was a call that had a hidden meaning.

This supposition became almost a certainty in the mind of Old Kemp, as the ensuing moment the darky answered the call.

Dan repeated the cry of the nightbird exactly as it had sounded from the trees.

"Ha! As I thought. The darky knew that cry was a signal," muttered Old Kemp.

Then to Dan:

"What is it, boy?"

"De call ob the black man's league."

"What is that?"

"It's bound by oath nebber to tell. But Union folks don't count in de oath. So I'll done tole yer, Mars Linkum's man."

"Well, speak out."

"You done hear tell ob de underground railroad 'fo de war?"

"Yes. By the underground railroad was meant a secret route by which slaves were helped to escape to Canada and the North."

"Dat's it!"

"Honest white men, who didn't believe one man was made to be the slave of another, lived all along the route."

"Glory! you knows all about it."

"And those honest fellers jist smuggled the runaway slaves along, from one to another, until these poor devils are safe beyond the reach of their masters."

"Heaven bress dem men!"

"Rattle-nakes an' red kin, yes!"

"Well, sah, the truff am, de brack man's league am a secret society among de niggers."

"Yes."

"Course I knows dem."

"Then why haven't you cut sticks afore this?"

"Case I was 'spected, an' old mars put me in chains an' kept me close till he done sent me to de slave market to be sold 'way down Souf."

"But now, Dan, I reckon we hev got to git out of the rebel country by the underground railway, if we get clear at all. Redskins and rattlesnakes, yes!"

"Dat's so; but har comes one ob de men ob de brack man's league."

Old Kemp saw a stalwart negro advancing from the clump of trees whence the secret signal of the slaves had sounded.

"Do you know that man?" asked Old Kemp, a trifle apprehensively.

"Deed I do. Dat man am my own brother, sah."

"Then surely he is to be trusted."

"Yes, sah."

Dan stepped forward as he spoke and shook hands with the stalwart colored man warmly.

Then the two men conversed in low tones.

For some moments they continued their conversation.

Then Dan stepped back to Old Kemp.

"Deed to goodness, sah, we is in great luck. De society am meetin' to-night in de ole mill under de hill down yonder beyond ther trees," said Dan.

"Well, I'll go on with you to the deserted home up the road, where I hope to find my friends, and then, if the colored folks can send a guide with us, we'll try ter pass the pickets of ther Johnnies and make our way north by the underground route."

At that moment a man was seen coming on a run.

He approached from the direction of the deserted house.

Old Kemp raised his rifle.

"Dat man am Jubal Kane, a friend!" exclaimed Dan.

The next morning Old Kemp saw the man was a negro. He came up hastily and said:

"Hole de Lawd, dar am some good Union folks in trouble at de ole house up dar; I done saw de rebs dar. Da done surround de house an' call on somebody inside to surrender."

"Redskins an' rattlesnakes, my friends are found out. Come, I'll not go back on 'em now if I lose my scalp!" cried Old Kemp.

He started forward as he spoke.

"Hole on, dar, white man! Hole on, I told yer!" said Dan, seizing the scout's arm.

Then to the negro who had just come up:

"How many rebs am dar there, Nick?"

"Big crowd, an' dat Cap Jaffers am wid 'em."

"Neal Jaffers! Ned's deadly foe!" cried Old Kemp.

"Jubal, fotch de boyos frum de mill. Now am de time for de han's to strike fer liberty. De guns am stored in de cellar ob de mill. Let all han's arm and come on to de rescue of Mars Linkum's folks," said Dan.

"Yes, we'll do dat. Word come from de colored han's on de Magnolia to-night. De boys was goin' fer de James river an' liberty 'fore de break ob day, anyhow," said Jubal, and he darted away.

In a few moments he returned with the men of the secret league of the slaves of Petersburg.

They numbered a score and all were armed.

Old Kemp meanwhile had asked for an explanation of Jubal's last remarks.

Dan stated that the Magnolia was a small steamer in the service of the Confederacy on the James river, near Richmond.

The boat was manned by colored men mostly, and they were members of the slave league.

A plot had long been hatching among the secret league of the slaves to seize the little stranger and run her north up the river to a point near the Union outposts.

Led by Old Kemp, the little band of black men, who meant to escape from bondage, advanced toward the deserted house.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THROUGH THE ENEMY'S LINES.

When Mildred uttered the scream that fell from her lips, after she rushed into the interior room of the deserted house, her cry was intended to call Ned.

Terror lent her voice its thrilling intonations.

She had accidentally made a great discovery.

Stumbling against a panel of broken wainscoting, she felt it yield, and a secret door was disclosed.

Mildred sprang through it.

The door closed as she stepped through it, for her weight worked a lever connected with the floor on the inside of the door.

Thus it was the hunted Union girl so mysteriously vanished.

We have seen how she rushed forth into the presence of her foes.

She had heard Jaffers' cruel threat to hang Ned.

The devoted girl could not let him meet his death to insure her concealment.

The old Union scout and his colored band arrived at the deserted house just after Mildred threw the rope from off the neck of the boy cavalry scout.

Then they charged the rebels, who surrounded the deserted house.

A short conflict ensued.

Every man of the rebel band outside the house fell under the bullets of the desperate blacks who were battling for freedom.

It was the force under Old Kemp that charged into the house and continued the conflict there.

The veteran scout was among the men of the slave secret league.

But in the confusion Ned and Mildred did not see him.

But they felt that the black men who so furiously attacked the rebels were friends.

Seeing the strife going against him, Jaffers leaped through a window and fled.

The arch villain seemed to bear a charmed life that night. He was the only one of the band who made good his escape.

All the others were either wounded or killed.

Old Kemp reached the side of Ned as Jaffers fled.

While several of the colored men darted in pursuit of the escaping rebel, the veteran scout hurried Ned and Mildred out of the house.

Guided by Dan and attended by the band of blacks, they set out for the woods north of Petersburg.

As they went along the old scout explained the situation to the young lovers.

When they had heard all, they could but admit that it seemed a special Providence was at work in their behalf.

They had found friends to help them in the stronghold of the enemy when they least expected them.

The brave blacks were to be relied upon the trio knew, for had not their conduct already proven that?

The black leaguers had their plans well matured.

They knew the location of all the rebel picket stations around the Confederate city.

Now it was their purpose to guide their white friends by the outposts of their foes.

The knowledge the blacks had of the country was also to be considered of the greatest value.

Old Kemp and Ned conversed in low tones as they hurried along with Mildred between them.

They knew Jaffers would give the alarm, and that no doubt the sound of the skirmish at the old house had already called rebels that way to learn the cause of the firing.

The Unionists knew that they would be pursued, and that every effort would be made to cut off their escape and run them down.

The night grew darker as they went on.

They were just entering the shelter of the woods north of the rebel city, when Ned cried, as he pointed in the direction of Petersburg:

"See! See! The enemy is sending up signal rocket!"

All looked back and saw it was as Ned said.

Balls of colored fire were seen to shot gracefully up into the sky and explode.

"That means the varmints are notifying their most distant pickets to be on the lookout," said Old Kemp.

The escaping party plunged into the woods.

Led by Dan, who seemed sure of the route, they went straight on for some distance.

But finally their course was changed due west.

"We am strikin' fer de river now," then said Dan.

And he added:

De Magnolia steamer am at 'Long Warf' to-night, out of range of the biggest batteries. Dar we must capture de boat."

"It's a desperate undertaking," said Mildred.

"But it is our only chance. We must take the steamer or be captured and carried back to our doom," replied Ned.

On and still on hurried the fugitives.

Presently Dan announced:

"We have now left the last rebel picket in de rear, an' we didn't go near him. De brack men are almost out ob slavery."

The poor slaves sent up a murmur of earnest thanksgiving as they heard the words of their leader.

But they did not pause.

The pace the fugitives had thus far maintained told upon Mildred's power of endurance.

But Ned and Old Kemp each gave her a hand and struggled on.

The thought that she was fleeing from a fate worse than death inspired the brave Union girl.

She seemed gifted with strength to meet the present trying ordeal, and she sought not to become too great a burden to her friends.

The way to the James river seemed a weary journey.

The distance traversed was great because of the necessity of eluding the rebel pickets, which had hired the guide to lead his followers far from the right course.

But at length the sound of running waters were heard ahead.

A colored guide then halted and crept forward to reconnoiter, instructing his companions to await his return.

Dan was absent twenty minutes or more.

"Heaven am watchin' ober us. De Magnolia am at de warf, an' I done gib de colored boys de signal," announced Dan.

Then the party advanced and presently came upon the levee beside the river. There was a straggling hamlet, and at a little wharf the rebel boat "The Magnolia" was tied up.

"Forward!" cried Ned, and the party made a dash to board the vessel.

CHAPTER XIX.

CAPTURE OF THE MAGNOLIA—CONCLUSION.

The Magnolia was a small sidewheeler, used as a supply boat, plying up and down the James, carrying provisions and forage to the rebel capital from the upper valley, which yet remained in the hands of the rebels.

The vessel was officered by white men, and the engineer was a rank Confederate.

All the deckhands and stokers were blacks.

The slaves were ready for the coming of their friends.

The white officers were overpowered and made prisoners without firing a shot.

Then the chains were cast off and the vessel became adrift.

Leaving Mildred in a cabin, Ned and Old Kemp descended to the engine-room, while the pilot—a darky of the secret league—stood at the wheel.

The rebel engineer met the Union scout at the door of the engine room.

The fellow had a revolver in each hand.

"Stand, or I fire!" he cried, upon beholding the two Union scouts.

"Hold on!" said Old Kemp. "We have captured the boat. The Yankees have taken Petersburg. The niggers want to kill you, but I've promised to save your life—on condition—"

The veteran looked very serious.

The rebel engineer began to turn pale.

He was evidently inclined to weaken.

"What do you want of me?" he demanded.

"Start the engine. We are a-going to run this up north."

While Old Kemp spoke Ned had leveled his revolver at the engineer. The latter now glanced beyond the boy cavalry scout and saw a number of angry black faces peering at him.

He knew the colored hands hated him.

No doubt he felt great fear of them, for he said:

"Protect me from the revengeful niggers, and I'll do just as you say."

"That's right. I'll see no harm comes to you. I give you my word on that."

As the scout thus replied, the engineer put up his weapon and sprang to the lever of the engine.

In a moment he got the vessel under way.

She was headed north.

Leaving Ned to guard the engineer, Old Kemp ran up on deck.

The scout joined the wheelman in the pilot-house, and the latter said:

"Dar am three small batteries we have got to pass on de way up to Dutch Gap."

"If they don't find out this vessel is in the hands of Union men the batteries will not open fire on her," said Old Kemp.

"No, sah. But look dar!"

The pilot pointed in the direction of the dock they had left behind.

Lights were seen moving about there, and the Union scout saw a band of mounted men dash up to the levee.

By the light of the torches being waved along the dock he saw the mounted men were a band of rebel cavalry.

"Redskins and rattlesnakes!" cried the old scout. "I reckon de that the Johnnies have in some way tracked us to Petersburg."

At that moment a chorus of doleful, long-drawn howls were heard from the wharf.

"Bloodhounds!" exclaimed the darky pilot, with a shudder.

"Right! I reckon I understand how the rebel cavalry followed our trail."

"The dogs led them on the scent," he added.

Then Old Kemp felt very thankful that he and his comrades had not been run down in the woods, and he knew that they had narrowly escaped being overtaken.

The little steamer forged ahead at full speed, and the appointed rebel cavalrymen dashed along the river bank in pursuit.

They awoke the echoes of the night with their yells, and loud yells of "bet" to alarm the batteries above.

Old Kemp scanned the dark lines of earthworks which the boat must pass anxiously.

Presently lights began to flash among them, and the detonation of a cannon followed.

A great round shot whizzed over the deck of the steamer.

But she pushed on. On to run the gauntlet of death.

A fusillade of cannon shots were discharged from the batteries, as the rebel cannonaders saw the boat was bent upon running the blockade.

But only one shot struck the boat before she was out of range, and that single shot merely carried away a part of the railing.

The last battery was passed, and then on and on, led by the faithful darky pilot, went the little boat.

The voyage was continued until a point on the river at no great distance from the advance outpost of the Union Army of the James was reached. Then the boat was run ashore and all hands made their way to the camp of the boys in blue.

A hearty welcome awaited them there, and Ned and the noble old steeple-chaser, Shooting Star, safe at the Union camp and also his dog Bruno. Both animals had been brought back by the Union cavalry after their capture on the railroad.

Ned hastened to send dispatches to General Grant, acquainting him with the truth regarding the situation of the enemy at Petersburg, and no doubt that information proved of great service to the Union forces later on.

Mildred was sent safely to Ned's mother in Washington, and the boy cavalry scout remained fighting for the Union until the fall of Richmond. Then Ned and Old Kemp were captured and tried as a spy. He was convicted and sentenced to death. Before his death he confessed that he killed Ned's father and robbed him. The villain also acknowledged that the doctors had tried to poison Mildred and that there were yet a drop of poison blood in her veins, but that he was the father of Old Kemp's first wife, both by birth and not by adoption.

The money belonging to the government which the boy cavalry scout and Old Kemp had recovered was sent by them to the secretary of the treasury, but they were rewarded with a handsome reward.

A few years after the close of the war, if the reader could have looked into a cozy and happy home in Washington, he might have seen Ned and Mildred, who, as a man and wife, had settled down to reside at the capital, where Ned held an excellent government office.

Old Kemp made Ned's home his home, and the veteran found a congenial and comfortable abode in the city.

The boy scout and his father, with his famous horse and noble dog, lived happily and died of old age.

Next week is published "THE BOY FERRISMAN; OR, STANDING BY THE MACHINE."

INTERESTING ARTICLES

SHOES FROM FRANCE TO BE MENDED.

A Fulton, Mo., cobbler claims the champion long-distance customer of the United States. He received a pair of shoes from France recently to be half-soled. The shoes belong to Manny Muir, a Fulton soldier, who sent them to his friend, Bill Golding, a cobbler.

EGYPT PET LION ON FOUNTAIN.

The original reason for the public fountains where the water comes out of a lion's mouth was that among the ancient Egyptians the rising of the waters of the Nile, meaning life and prosperity to the whole nation, always took place when the sun was in the constellation of Leo. The lion's head on foundations is a symbol of the life-giving waters of the Nile.

MIRROR GAVE HIM AWAY.

A reflection a woman saw in a mirror betrayed an alleged burglar and enabled Corp. Wexler and Trooper Donnelly of the Spring Valley station of the State Constabulary to capture him in the East Wadden station of the New York Central Railroad. Mrs. Georgia Mills caught the flash of a light in her mirror just after midnight. Investigating, she saw a lighted match burning in the depot a short distance away. She knew the station was locked for the night, so she asked a passerby to call the police. George Smith, 22, of Duluth, Minn., was found coiled up on a bench smoking a good-night cigarette. He pleaded guilty to a charge of vagrancy and the police justice shunted him off to the workhouse for 30 days.

THE BLOODY BATTLE OF PORT ARTHUR.

On a hill near Port Arthur, China, there looms a grand memorial tower, and just back of it are buried, in unmarked trenches, the bodies of 22,000 of the bravest soldiers of Nippon. It is a shrine for every loyal Japanese. On the side of another hill lie buried all that is mortal of 15,000 Russians, and there also a monument has been reared. These were the men who died during the siege of Port Arthur, which commenced 15 years ago and continued for almost a year. Although Port Arthur was given back to China by the Japanese, it remains for all practical purposes a stronghold of Nippon, and it is to-day more Japanese in character than Chinese, and is likely to remain so unless Japan is forced to relinquish the city by another war.

ALASKA SEAL TRADE ADDS \$1,000,000 TO TREASURY.

Uncle Sam now receives about \$1,000,000 annual revenue from his Alaska fur seal service, according

to a statement by H. M. Smith, commissioner of fisheries of the Department of Commerce. For several years the killing of seals was stopped by law, but by an act of congress in 1917 it was resumed to a limited extent, the last year under vigilant official supervision. Under the new methods only the surplus males are killed.

VOLCANO EMITS SEA OF LAVA.

The following is reported by an observer in Hawaii: Tremendous changes are in progress at Kilauea and there is no indication whatsoever of any cessation of the monumental rising of the entire vast lava column. Over the southwest brink a wide stream of glistening lava is sluggishly flowing in the direction of the Kalu desert, not with the spectacular cascading torrents of the southeastern flows of last March, but with a steady, stealthy gliding, which gains ground slowly at its face, but which piles up into tremendous masses from its source forward.

AN IMMENSE CAVE FOUND AND EXPLORED.

An immense cave, the largest in Madison County, Arkansas, and apparently one of the largest in the State, has been discovered on a farm belonging to former State Senator Lemuel Kendall, situated four miles northeast of Alabama. The entrance, obscure and scarcely noticeable, is near King's River.

The cave has been explored a distance of five miles, and many other passages opened beyond in an intricate and apparently endless procession. Scores of rooms, some small, but one more than a quarter of an acre in extent, were explored. There are many stalagmites and stalactites in every room. Both are united in several places, forming wonderful white columns that stand sentinel-like near the remains of strange animals and heaps of human bones.

For, while nothing was known of this cave until a short time ago, it was evidently well known in the past, and seems to have been used as a burial spot in primitive times. The sloping skull of a man of a vanished race has been found.

A swift subterranean river flows in this cave, and it is large enough for big boats to float on its surface. Blind fish are found in its waters. Yawning chasms of unknown depths render travel in some portions of the cave exceedingly dangerous, and one of the explorers who lost his footing was rescued with difficulty. Many beautiful basins worn out of solid rock are found, and these contain crystal-clear pools.

Although remote from the railroad, it is believed that many students of geology will visit this remarkable cavern and read its wonderful history.

GOOD READING

SOLDIER SHOTS SURGEON.

About to undergo an operation on April 4 for a deformity to his leg, Private Nathan Hurt, an overseas patient at the Plattsburg Base Hospital, drew a pistol from his bathrobe and wounded Lieut. Henryck A. Reye, an army medical officer, who had started to administer the anesthetic. Hurt had been wounded in action and to straighten his leg, surgeons decided it would be necessary to break it and reset it. He was taken to the guard-house.

TWINS MADE RICH.

Twin wells that yielded large flows of oil on the same day brought fortune to two former Geary County men, Rolla and Wallace Cameron, in the El Dorado fields. The men are twins and grew to manhood near Junction City, Kansas. The fact that the men are twins, as are the wells that put them on the road to riches, has excited considerable comment. A recent number of an oil journal tells of the men receiving \$27,000,000 in one check.

BURIED OLD MULE.

There is general sorrow among the employes of the Department of Public Works of Braddock, Pa., because of the death of Tom, "the best-natured mule in the world." Tom, who always balked at being shod, stepped on a rusty nail a few days ago, lock-jaw set in and, despite every effort of veterinarians, he died. The funeral was conducted with much ceremony, the animal being buried with a wreath of evergreens about his neck. A quart of oats was sprinkled over his grave.

Tom was the most generous mule that ever lived according to Braddock employes, but he was sure death to dogs. The dog that escaped his hoofs, once in range, was a lucky animal. If the borough can not find another Tom it will buy a motor truck.

NEW SHIPS TO CARRY 50,000 MEN A WEEK.

Josephus Daniels, Secretary of the Navy, left April 2 for Italy, where he visited the Italian fleet and naval bases. Prior to his departure Mr. Daniels expressed his pleasure at the admirable work of the American navy in taking over German ships and the expeditious manner in which these vessels have been made available for the transportation of troops back to the United States.

"These ships," said Mr. Daniels, "vary in tonnage, from 11,000 to 24,000, and as at present equipped they can accommodate in the aggregate about 25,000 men. After the first trip to the United States they will be adapted to accommodate about twice that number of soldiers.

"The ships will be put into the regular service. Three of them already are in French ports and oth-

ers are expected within a short time. The ships were taken from Hamburg by German crews to Spithead, England, where within 24 hours they were taken over by the American navy."

BRITISH 18-INCH NAVAL GUN.

Describing the British 18-inch gun, the largest naval gun in the world, which was built and placed aboard monitors and which was used in bombarding Ostend, the London Engineer gives the following interesting facts:

"The special mounting allows an elevation of 15 degrees, in which position the gun has a range of nearly 50,000 yards, or, say, 30 miles. The projectile stands close on seven feet in length, and weighing 3,600 pounds, has a long 'wind-cheating' cap. The fact that a gun of this enormous weight could be mounted on board such a vessel as the Lord Clive, in addition to her armament of two 12-inch guns, without seriously affecting stability or trim, says much for the generous lines and substantial construction of the monitor type. The shell, when capped and fired and striking normally, is capable of perforating armor of the following thicknesses, the shell itself emerging unbroken on the other side of the plate: At point-blank range, no less than 41 inches of hard-faced armor. This is equivalent to a wall of unhardened steel of about 54 inches (four feet six inches!) At 10 miles and 20 miles, respectively, 22 inches and 12½ inches of hard-faced armor of the latest and best type. Finally, at the extreme range of no less than 30 miles, armor of ordinary steel having a thickness of close upon one foot. As a matter of fact, the shell in actual trials perforated a hard-faced plate of a thickness nearly equal to its caliber at a velocity equivalent to a range of about 14 miles. Thus the heaviest armor afloat, when attacked by it, would not be much better than a piece of card-board. Officers who were on board the Lord Clive during the final bombardment of Ostend state that the discharge of the 18-inch piece had no apparent effect on the structure of the vessel and the blast was felt only at the extremity of the fore-castle. No fittings were injured, nor was any damage sustained by the two searchlights, which are placed directly abaft the 18-inch shield. Unfortunately—or otherwise—the armistice intervened before this tremendous weapon had fired many rounds at the hostile positions, but judging by its first performance it has a distinctly promising future. Even with reduced charges its range appears to be much superior to that of the smaller naval guns, and it need hardly be said that the shattering power of the 3,600 pound projectile is very great. Whether this gun will reappear in the capital ship of the near future remains to be seen."

FROM ALL POINTS

CONDUCTOR RETURNS \$1,100.

The return of \$1,100 to the United Railways Company, St. Louis, Mo., by a former conductor, who said he had stolen the amount in one year, was announced recently. It is one of the largest contributions on record to the company's "conscience fund." The former conductor first sent a check for \$100 from a town in Iowa a month ago, with the explanation that it was money which he had taken that belonged to the company. He signed his name and address, and President McCulloch of the company replied, thanking and complimenting him. A few days later a second letter came, enclosing a negotiable note for \$1,000. The conscience-stricken man said that the \$1,100 was stolen 5 cents at a time.

SACRED WHITE ELEPHANTS NOT

The white elephant is not what the word implies—white. It is gray, with the distinctive marks of the albino, that is, light-colored iris of the eye, white toenails, white or reddish body hairs and pink skin near the end of the trunk and underneath the body. White elephants, so-called, are comparatively rare, writes George Pratt Ingersoll, former United States Minister to Siam. Only a few are in captivity. Years ago, according to accounts, there was a good deal of ceremony attending the capture of one, but there are a good many fairy tales. There are four or five white elephants now at Bangkok. I found them comfortably but not gaudily housed, with a stout teakwood fence surrounding a small space about their stables. The white elephants at Bangkok are secured by ropes and chains indoors most of the time, but, notwithstanding, they look fat and healthy.

A BICYCLE FAMINE.

A bicycle famine is coming, according to inside information from bicycle manufacturers.

Practically all of the big manufacturers of bicycles co-operated with Uncle Sam by devoting their plants to the production of munitions, airship parts, hand grenades, "75" shells and military bicycles of a special pattern that very materially cut down the normal output of regular models.

The lost production on account of war work and inability to get steel has already caused a serious shortage.

More time will be lost while the factories are changing their equipment back to a bicycle basis. There is also a tremendous export demand for bicycles.

In the meantime the existing shortage of bicycles is daily becoming more acute and a veritable bicycle famine seems inevitable.

Men in the industry who know the actual capacity

of the plants estimate that it will take at least a year for the output of bicycles to catch up with the demand.

A good many thousand boys and a sizable army of men, who have been looking forward to owning new bicycles this season, may have to walk.

THE SARAJEVO MYSTERY.

The assassination in Sarajevo of the Austrian Archduke Ferdinand, heir to the Hapsburg throne, and his morganatic wife, the Duchess of Hohenberg, was the signal for the unloosening of the passions which plunged Europe into war. This fateful crime still remains a mystery.

It was apparent at the time that no adequate police protection was given the imperial couple. First a bomb was thrown at the heir apparent. It fell outside his carriage and injured a member of his escort riding in the carriage behind. Later in the day Ferdinand and his wife were shot dead while again driving through the streets. Not even the most ordinary precautions seem to have been taken to insure their safety.

The trial of the assassins ended unsatisfactorily. It was held behind closed doors. Light sentences were imposed. Evidently there was a desire to shield somebody. The crime had produced its desired political effect. It offered a pretext for an Austro-Hungarian attack on Serbia. There was a marked disposition to treat it as a closed incident.

The ruling clique at Vienna hated Francis Ferdinand. Francis Joseph despised him. He had married a Czech. He was the proponent of a scheme to reorganize the empire into a triple monarchy, the Slav peoples to acquire an equal status with the Austrians and Hungarians. He was opposed to seeking a quarrel with Serbia. He had fallen out with William II over Germany's policy of military expansion. Many powerful elements in the monarchy were interested in preventing his succession to the aged Francis Joseph. They were prepared to hail his removal as a blessing.

He was "removed." But at whose instigation? A pamphlet has just been published in Austria, written by a priest who was formerly spiritual adviser of the Duchess of Hohenberg. It charges that the court at Vienna and the Hungarian nobility instigated the Sarajevo assassinations. Tisza is suggested as the arch-plotter. The author's theory is that Ferdinand and his wife were sacrificed in order to pave the way for a break with the Serbians. This explanation is neither new nor incredible. Perhaps the truth will come to light when the new Jugo-Slav state is erected and the mysterious proceedings at Sarajevo can be laid bare.

AFTER BLACK DIAMONDS

—OR—

THE BOYS OF COAL SHAFT NO. 3

By WILLIAM WADE

(A Serial Story)

CHAPTER IX (Continued).

"By George, you're right!" exclaimed the elder Merlin. "I'll have to look into this and we'll have the entry brought through straight and thus have another passage out by way of No. 2 shaft."

"That will be a good idea," answered Robert.

"Well, I'll have that looked into by Jenkins," said the elder Merlin. "I'm going now to the room where Stanton and Rogers are. You say they are down this way?" as he nodded to the south.

"Third room on the right side," answered Robert.

The operator left the party and started back to see the men in whom he was interested.

Then Will asked Robert to show the girls how they mined coal.

"Very well. We'll do our best to show them how it's done, but I want you to do the talking," answered Robert. "We've got an hour behind and we want to get two more cars up to the top this afternoon. They have pushed two more cars on our track. That means that we must load them this afternoon."

The two young miners turned back to their room, crawling down and beginning again at the drilling of the hole for the placing of the explosive.

The girls watched the two young fellows with much interest, one of them working on his back at digging under the vein, while the other was drilling out the hole above.

After a little of this work Robert crawled out from the hole to get a fresh breath and to rest himself.

"Isn't that awfully hard work down there, Mr. Newton?" asked Etta, while the other girls had turned to look down the entry and talk about the winders of the mine.

"Yes, it's hard work, but it has to be done," answered the boy.

"But surely there's something else to be done that you can do," she went on.

"Yes, I suppose so," and he smiled pleasantly. "But, you see, it's the kind of work that I learned to do, and it pays better than being a clerk in some other fellow's store."

"Are you going to save your money and go to college?" she asked next.

Over the boy's face there came a pained expression and she saw at once that she had made a mistake. Then she remembered what she had been told of the boy's condition and of his working for his mother.

"No, I guess my school days ended a long time

ago," he answered. "It is altogether a matter of bread and meat with me, and I like the work. It isn't always mining, digging day after day that I want. There's something beyond that, and it's that something that I want."

"Oh, then you don't expect to go on digging coal?" she asked, and in her voice there was a tone of gladness.

"No. Digging coal all my life is hardly the thing that I've planned to do. I am planning to become a coal-mining engineer if I pass the examination."

"Are you studying for that now?" was the next question.

He answered that he was working at that, and said that he was also studying mining surveying so that he would be proficient to be a counselling engineer after a while.

In the meanwhile Jim was blowing out the hole preparatory to loading in the powder. The girls watched this part of the work with interest, and then they saw the "tamping" done as a tiler was placed in front of the powder so that its force would be distributed.

"Now, we've placed the fuse and we're ready to fire it," said Robert when this work had been completed. "Just step out of the room, right along the entry, and we'll light the fuse. When we come back this vein of coal will be on the floor."

The party all hurried out of the room and along the entry to a safe distance. Presently Robert and Jim came running out and joined them.

Boom! The roar was heavy and dull and they felt it as the air was pushed along the entry by the force of the detonation.

Robert bent close to the ground to dodge the higher gases, pulling Etta down with him, the other girls stooping, too, and the rush above them told of the passing of the small dust and the gas-laden air.

Swish! howl! There was a sudden noise as of something passing swiftly through the air, then a loud howl as of thousands of animals in pain, and then a roar somewhere in the distance.

Like a flash Robert Newton grabbed Etta about the waist and threw her to the ground, while Jim grabbed two of the other girls. Will Merlin, seeing this, and knowing that something must be wrong, grabbed the remaining girl and fell to the ground. With a louder and steadily growing howl the noise came closer and closer and then passed directly over their heads as Robert lay flat on top of Etta and crouched close. Having passed over and the cloud of dust which trailed behind having passed, Robert crawled to his feet.

"Fire! fire!" came a yell from along the entry, and several men suddenly turned into the side entry in which Robert and the party of girls were.

"Where is it? Where is it?" called out Robert.

"Back in the main west entry! The place has caved in and the air-shaft is on fire!" howled one of the men.

(To be continued.)

LUCKY JOE BROWN

OR

THE SMARTEST BOY IN NEW YORK

By J. P. RICHARDS

(A serial story)

CHAPTER XI.

THE HIDING HOLE IN THE LOTS.

In a minute they came to the place where the hill took a turn, and here they struck a deep sand pit.

Ludlum caught Joe's arm and stopped. For a few moments he stood looking warily about him in every direction.

The sky was overcast, a decided chill was in the air.

Joe thought that this was just about the loneliest spot he had ever struck, and he wondered what the motive of the detective bringing him to it could possibly be.

"The coast seems to be clear," remarked Ludlum after a little. "Now, then, Joe, go down into that hollow. Do you see where that old board is standing up against the bank?"

Joe could just make out the bank, and he said so.

"Well, get down there," said the detective. "Pull away the board, see what you can find behind it. Then come back and report to me."

Wondering what it could all mean, Joe descended into the hollow and made his way to the board.

Now, he found there were two boards.

They were partially imbedded in the sand.

With some difficulty Joe managed to pull one of them out, and then discovered that the board protected the mouth of a large cement pipe which ran in under the sand.

Determined to make his examination thorough, Joe got down on his hunkies and peered into the pipe, but could see nothing.

He then put the board back again and kicked the sand around it, making everything look as it had been before.

He now started to return up the bank when he suddenly discovered that the detective had disappeared.

"Where on earth has he gone?" thought Joe.

When he got up on top of the bank he saw in the distance a man coming down the street.

At first he thought it was Ludlum, but as the man drew nearer he saw that he had a big bag slung over his shoulder, and that he was certainly not the detective.

Joe slid across the street, for, to tell the truth, he was somewhat afraid.

The man's eye was upon him, however.

Suddenly he stopped and called out:

"Hey, Johnny! Any of de boys around?"

Joe hurried on, pretending not to hear.

But he was not to escape thus easily.

The man darted across the street and cut in ahead of him.

"You vait!" he cried, "or I make you vait! Whater matter wit you? Any of de boys around?"

"What boys?" demanded Joe.

"Oh, come off! You knowa me alla right."

"I don't know you, and I don't know what you are talking about," retorted Joe. "You let me go on now."

The man with the bag gave him one searching look and then, making a feint to strike at him, walked away.

Joe hurried on, wondering what could possibly have become of Ludlum, and what he ought to do.

Then suddenly it occurred to him that the detective might be taking this opportunity to try him out and to see what he would do.

"I won't leave here," Joe said to himself. "Perhaps he wants me to watch that man."

Over the lot where the bank had been dug away many large boulders were scattered.

Joe dropped down behind one of them and watched the man with the bag from around the corner of the stone.

The fellow advanced to the edge of the hollow and paused.

Then in a minute he gave a shrill whistle, and then another and another.

For a few minutes he stood waiting, and then turning, he trailed off over the lots and disappeared in the darkness.

Joe got up from behind his stone.

As he did so he saw a man suddenly pop up from behind another right alongside of him.

It startled him for the moment, but then he saw that it was Ludlum.

The detective came forward.

"What did that fellow ask you?" he demanded.

"If any of the boys were about."

"And what did you tell him?"

"That I didn't know what he meant. I thought he was going to hit me at first. Then he went away."

"That's all right, and you are all right. What did you find behind that board?"

"A piece of cement pipe."

"Yes, and did you hear anything?"

"Not a sound."

"I saw you looking into the pipe. Do you think you could crawl through it?"

"I think I might manage to wriggle through, yes, but you couldn't do it."

"I know I couldn't. That's one reason why I hired you. Come, let us go back and you shall try it."

"But what is the object?"

(To be continued.)

PLUCK AND LUCK

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GOOD CURRENT NEWS ARTICLES

The United States Bureau of Mines has announced that it has developed a novel method for giving danger warning in mines, particularly metal mines, in which compressed air is used throughout the workings. An ill-smelling substance is injected into the compressed air line and within a few minutes the odor is spread through all parts of the mine.

When Patrick Gleason, 73 years of age, died suddenly of heart failure at his home in Denver, Colo., it was supposed he was penniless. A few days later it was discovered he was possessed of an estate worth considerably more than \$25,000. As a reward for her tender and faithful care when he was sick and when she thought him a pauper and unable to pay for her services, Mrs. Hattie J. Tummond, whom Gleason had adopted as his daughter, is his sole heir. Mrs. Tummond, who has been appointed administratrix of his estate, was adopted by Gleason as his daughter four years ago, after she had nursed him through a lengthy illness. Mrs. Tummond was then a practicing nurse.

The origin of our common number symbols has never been clearly established, but until recently all writers agreed that these symbols were transmitted to Europe by the Arabs, who had obtained them from India. It is very interesting to note that available data relating to the origin of our common number symbols have been carefully re-examined by Carra de Vaux. Among the most surprising results are the following: Our common number symbols originated in Europe and from there were transmitted to the Persians. Both India and Arabia received them from Persia, so that the common term Hindu-Arabic numerals is decidedly misleading. The common numerals did not come from letters of the alphabet, but were formed directly for the purpose of representing numbers.

Capt. George J. Corbett, a well-known expert with the rifle, has charge of the fourteenth annual amateur championship shoot of America at clay target, to be held under the auspices of the New York Athletic Club on May 2 and 3 at Travers Island, Pelham Manor, N. Y. There will be ten prizes to the value of \$500 in the preliminary event, and ten prizes to the value of \$1,000 in the championship event. There will also be fifteen consolation prizes for the high scratch scores, following the ten high scratch scores made in the amateur championship. The latter prizes are valued at \$350. The entrance fee is \$10, which includes targets. Full information may be obtained by addressing Capt. George J. Corbett, at the N. Y. A. C., Travers Island, Pelham Manor, N. Y. There are quite a number of officers and men in the services who are crack wing shots that should be interested in the above mentioned matches.

GRINS AND CHUCKLES

"Blinks inherits his wit." "Yes, he writes the same jokes his grandfather wrote."

Mother—Where are those oranges that were on the table? Tommy—With the tarts that were in the cupboard, I suppose.

"Really," began Mrs. Nagg, "the inquisitiveness of those people next door has driven me crazy." "Oh," replied her husband, "is that what did it?"

"Why, Willie, what have you done to Jimmy Woods that he has gone home crying?" Willie—Well, he told a lot of boys that his ma said our family was one of the oldest in the place, and I licked him.

"What is it your husband wants to see me about, Della?" asked Mrs. Borrough's father. "Why, father," said Della, "I think he wanted to borrow a couple of hundred dollars from you. He's so anxious to get out of debt."

Paterfamilias was lecturing his son on education. "Look here, my boy," he said, "I made my pile with only a common school education." "I dare say, dad," replied the son, "but it takes a college education to know how to spend it."

Not long since a New Hampshire committeeman was examining an infant school class. "Can any little girl or boy give the definition of the word 'average?'" he asked. For some time no one replied, but finally a little girl hesitatingly replied: "It is a thing a hen lays an egg on, sir." "No, that's not right." "Yes, sir, my book says so," and she trotted up to her questioner, and pointed to this sentence in her reading book: "A hen lays an egg every day on an average."

A FEW GOOD ITEMS

EX-HOUSEKEEPER BUYS \$400,000 HOTEL.

Mme. Caroline Genet, formerly of Bath, Me., bought the Clarendon, a 10-story apartment house on the north-west corner of Park avenue and 58th street, New York City, of which she had been the housekeeper for eight years. She paid \$400,000 to the David H. King estate for the property.

In 1897 Mme. Genet conducted a small boarding-house in 36th street, the Lenox, and in 1904 she leased the Stratford House. In 1906 she leased the Hotel Warrington at 161 Madison avenue, and later became sole proprietor.

Mme. Genet was born in Switzerland in 1865. In 1889 she was married to Paul Genet. After his death she was housekeeper for the family of the late J. P. Morgan and later started the boarding-house in 36th street.

PUT HIS HOUSE ON A WAGON TO GET TO WORK.

Moving, rent-finding and the high cost of rentals have no terrors for James Liller, his wife and son Edward, who last spring set their house on a wagon and hauled it to Bath, Me., and this spring repeated the journey of 73 miles, while the family enjoyed uninterrupted housekeeping.

Residents along the Maine highways have noted the curious spectacle of this moving domicile, the man seated comfortably on the frozen piazza driving the horses, the boy and a shepherd dog running alongside the wheels, the smoke curling from the kitchen stove and Mrs. Lillier's face occasionally at the window to watch the scenery and other points of interest.

Liller, who belongs in North Berwick, Me., has been cutting wood at Bath the last winter, and, in view of the scarcity of dwellings and rents—with the shipbuilding program on for Uncle Sam—he was glad that he had taken his Lares and Penates with him. The journey in each trip was made in three days.

GIRL LOCKED IN VAULT TELLS OF BANK ROBBERY.

A bank robbery and a free trip to New York have filled the last few weeks of Miss Gustie Olson's life full of thrills. Miss Olson, who is 21 and comes from Hopkins, Minn., was employed in the First National Bank of Minneapolis when three men entered with drawn revolvers on February 10 and demanded that all hands be thrown up.

She was in Supreme Court Justice Cahalan's chambers recently to identify the robbers in a hearing on a writ of habeas corpus which Charles Connors and Charles Thomas, arrested in New York City on a charge of complicity in the crime, sued out.

"Were you scared?" a reporter asked.

"I sure was!" she replied.

Miss Olson said she held up her hands as high as she could until the robbers ordered her and six others into an air-tight vault and locked the door on them. They set off the alarm and waited 15 minutes until rescuers came. They then shouted the combination through the walls of the safe and were released. Meantime the robbers had made off with \$37,000.

The hearing was adjourned until May 5 after William J. Fallon, attorney for the prisoners, said he would produce witnesses from Scranton, Pa., to testify that Thomas was in that city when the bank was robbed.

NEW THINGS.

To prevent fire a filling tube for gasoline tanks on stoves or automobiles is surrounded by a fine mesh wire screen through which flame cannot pass.

* * *

The existence of mica, obtainable in very large sheets, has been known in Guatemala for several years and efforts will be made to exploit the deposits.

* * *

To relieve the hand of the man forced to become a strap-hanger in a crowded car a New Jersey inventor has patented a hooked wristlet.

* * *

To obtain power from tides an Englishman catches the rising water in basins and makes it operate turbines connected to electric generators when it falls.

* * *

A recently patented corkscrew has a guide which prevents it pushing a cork into a bottle and also insures it penetrating vertically.

* * *

A French chemist's refrigeration process uses the expansion of sulphur dioxide gas to produce a low temperature.

* * *

A machine for making stick candy has been invented that has a daily capacity of 3,000 pounds.

* * *

The Island of Guadeloupe is to have an electric railway 118 miles long, two waterfalls being harnessed to provide the power.

* * *

A metal cigarette case that fits the vest pocket has been invented, from which a single cigarette can be taken without removing the case.

* * *

The opening of new telegraph cables to Ceylon has enabled the island to receive messages from London within half an hour of their filing.

ITEMS OF GENERAL INTEREST

GOT A DOLLAR IN SLIP.

M. E. Smith, a grocer of Waukegan, Ill., is looking for all the slippery places in the streets. While walking to work Smith slipped on the icy pavement. He broke the force of the fall by stretching out his arm. Just as his hand came in contact with the pavement his fingers clasped a stray \$1 bill.

INFANT SMOKES PIPE.

A Topeka, Kan., public health nurse, called to a case on the East Side, was shocked when the three-year-old son of the house gravely walked into the room smoking a pipe with all the composure of an old citizen, while watching the scandalized nurse with evident enjoyment. The parents, who looked on with complacent amusement, explained that the child had learned to smoke while taking treatment for asthma. Being indulgent parents, that was their excuse for declining to interfere with the habit.

PET WILD DUCKS.

Betsy and Mike, two specimens of wild duck, have been adopted by William Marratt, a photographer, Charlotte, Mich., who spends many week-ends at Lake Odessa, where he captured the pair. Mike, a ring-bill of

fiery temper, attempted to desert his red-head spouse, Betsy, but when he reached the skylight of the studio where they are kept, although succeeding in damaging the glass, was constrained to give up the attempt. Betsy is content to sit hour after hour pecking at grain scattered on the floor, and never waddles far from the basin of water kept at hand. When any one comes near Mike displays his antagonism by flapping his wings, scattering papers and grain like a miniature cyclone.

MISFORTUNE FOLLOWS FAMILY.

Misfortune has been following the family of B. C. Frederick of Hickorytown, Pa. Russell Frederick had one of his fingers cut off at work. Mr. Frederick and his son Clyde were motoring on Germantown pike when a lamp dropped from the car. Clyde jumped out before the car stopped and was thrown heavily. He sustained a fracture of the skull. News has been received from another son, John, a sergeant with the American army in France, stating he is in a hospital recovering from injuries received when a mule kicked him in the face.

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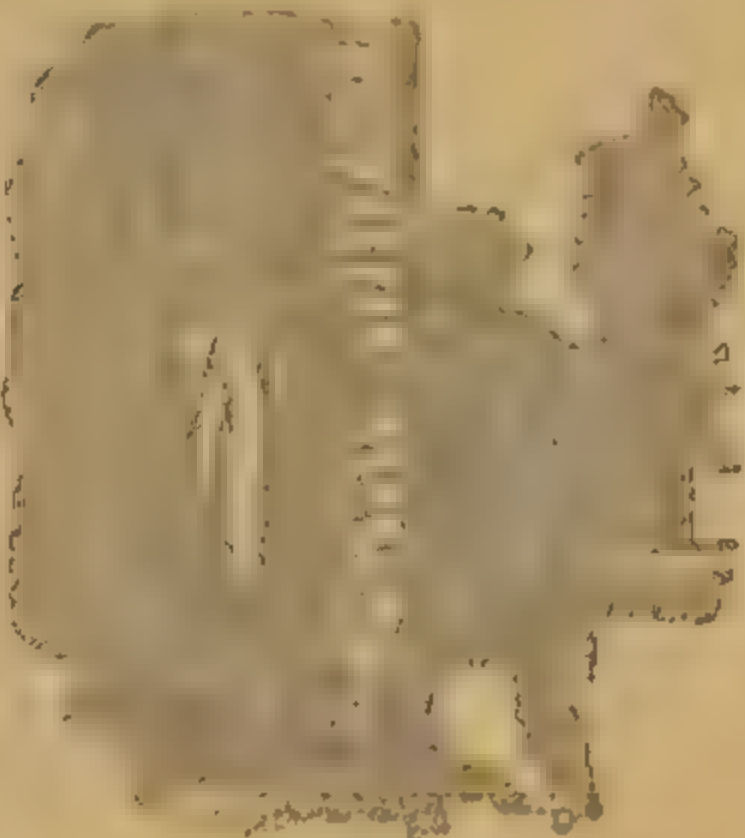
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 1069 The Boy Cattle King; or, Frank Fordham's Wild West Ranch. By An Old Scout.
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